A MODERN MADONNA

CAROLINE ABBOT STANLEY

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A MODERN MADONNA

BY

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TO THE FRAGRANT MEMORY
OF A SWEET YOUNG MOTHER WHO FACED DEATH
IN THE BATTLE OF MATERNITY—
AND LOST

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CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN

A HUSH fell on the waiting throng at old St. John's. The soft babble of modulated voices died suddenly away as from the greenery and the daisies of the chancel a singer's voice rose sweet and clear. The white-ribboned, white-canvased aisles were ready for the coming of a bride's feet, and the wedding guests imprisoned behind the silken bands bent forward expectantly to hear her nuptial song.

That song, as was most meet, breathed love and perfect trust; when it was finished there were tears in many eyes. Women's hearts are very tender at weddings, and the song was in the universal key.

In the vestibule, other ears were bending to catch the strains. With the first note Judge Kirtley raised his hand enjoining silence, and the ushers and the maids fell back, leaving the old man and his companion listening at the door. Upon his arm was Margaret, child of his love, though not of his blood. She was the daughter of his old friend, who, with his dying breath, had left her to his charge. He had been faithful to his trust; he had been to

her a father; and she, coming into his childless home, had filled a daughter's place. It would be lonely enough without her.

But it was not this that filled his mind as he listened to the song. He was thinking with the sense of helplessness that comes to every father, to every faithful guardian at a time like this, that he had done all he could; his trust was over; a moment more and he would give her for all time into the keeping of another. Would that other rise to meet the trust? This was the question reiterating itself in his soul. Did Victor De Jarnette know women's hearts—how strong they were to bear, how quick to bleed? Was his a hand that could be both strong and gentle? None other, he knew, could safely guide this girl of his. Margaret was high-strung and impetuous; her capacity for sorrow and for joy had sometimes made him stand aghast. Victor De Jarnette could make a heaven on earth for her, or—

He did not finish, but involuntarily he pressed close to him the white-gloved hand, and Margaret looked up wonderingly, marveling to see his face so stern. There was no shadow on her sky to-day. Her soul was in tune with the singer's rhapsody.

The song ended. There was a soft bustle in the vestibule; the majestic measures of Lohengrin filled her ears; the bridesmaids shook out their plumage and moved on; the flower girls were scattering roses for her path; and with uplifted head and shining eyes Margaret Varnum went forward to meet her lover.

In the chancel, proud, erect, and confident, stood Victor De Jarnette, waiting for her coming. In his black eyes was the triumph of possession. There were others in that church who had sought to win Margaret Varnum, and he did not forget it.

"He 's a devilish handsome fellow!" whispered a young officer in the south transept to his companion.

"Yes," was the reply, "with the primary accent on the adverb, eh?"

"Why does n't his brother take part in it?" asked Mrs. Pennybacker of her niece, "as best man or usher or something?"

Mrs. Van Dorn shrugged her shapely shoulders.

"He is opposed to it, I believe. Not to Margaret especially, but to marriage in general. I don't suppose you could persuade him to take part in a wedding—now."

"What is the matter with the man?" demanded her aunt. "He does n't look like a crank. What can have given him such a bias as this?"

Her niece smiled enigmatically. "Modesty forbids that I should say much on the subject, my dear aunt. But there are people who are unkind enough to lay to your niece's charge Richard De Jarnette's change of heart. She certainly remembers when he held altogether different views."

"Do you mean to say, Maria,—"

"Oh, no, certainly not, so don't look at me like that. I am only telling you what people say. Ah! There come the bridesmaids. Is n't that pink gown a dream?"

Mrs. Pennybacker was looking past the bridal party to the front pew, where sat Victor De Jarnette's elder brother, stern and unbending. By his side was a younger man, who spoke to him from time to time in a light way as if to cheer him, but his pleasantries elicited scant response. It was his friend, Dr. Semple. The two were the sole occupants of the pew reserved for the family of the bridegroom. The De Jarnette brothers were singularly alone.

"I don't believe it," thought Mrs. Pennybacker as she

studied the man's face. "He does n't look to me like a man who would lose his head over Maria, poor thing! as pretty as she is. Some women can make an offer of marriage out of an invitation to a prayer-meeting, and see a love letter in a note beginning, 'My dear madam.' Still, you can't tell. Maria *has* a pretty face. And men are great fools."

There was not a flaw in the matchless ceremony which has come down to us as a heritage from the ages; not a faltering note in either voice. "To love and to cherish . . . till death us do part." This was their plighted troth.

The church's challenge rang out boldly.

"If any man can show just cause why these two persons may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace."

A stillness fell upon the place. But no man spoke.

At that most searching admonition, "I require and charge you both, as ye will answer in the dreadful day of judgment . . . if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together . . . ye do now confess it," they searched their souls, but if they found impediment it stood unconfessed.

Once, Margaret felt her lover's hand close suddenly on hers and then relax. She loved him for his vehemence, and gave an answering clasp. At that moment those near the door looked into each other's faces with startled, questioning gaze and bent their heads to listen. No sound was heard above the rector's solemn monotone and the response.

"Victor, wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" The straining ears relaxed and gave heed to the bridegroom's vow. "Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

And Victor De Jarnette answered resonantly,

"I will."

Kneeling, they asked God's benediction on their wedded lives; then down the aisle in radiant happiness they led the train,—one flesh, if there be aught in vows—for evermore.

"DID you hear anything during that ceremony?" asked John Jarvis, the lawyer, of his wife as they drove away.

She looked up eagerly. "Yes. Did you?"

"I thought I did. What was it, do you think?"

"It sounded to me like a knock—"

"Yes,—"

"—and then a cry, faint, but like a woman's voice."

They spoke in guarded tones, but the old carriage driver, who had been in the family for twenty years and was a privileged character, heard and touched his hat.

"Dat was a crazy woman, miss, de p'liceman say, tryin' to git in widout no ticket. Dey run 'er in. Yaas, miss."

A knot of men who had likewise heard the knock discussed it as they walked toward Pennsylvania Avenue.

"He 's been wild," said one, raising his brow, and his companion answered with easy tolerance,

"Oh, yes, of course. But he has sowed his wild oats, and now he is ready to settle down."

A lady, passing, caught the words and their drift.

"Did you ever notice," she said thoughtfully to her husband, who walked beside her, "that people always say, 'Oh well, he has sowed his wild oats,' as if that finished it? But in the country, where I was born, we sow our oats and know that we will reap. I imagine 'wild oats' are not very different from other kinds."

CHAPTER II

THE ELDER BROTHER

"Some of him lived but the most of him died—
(Even as you and I!)"

"FOR one thing he is too young," said Richard De Jarnette. "At twenty-one a man is still a boy, unless he has had more to develop him than Victor has ever had. And besides—"

And there he stopped.

It was the evening after the wedding, and the two men sat in the library of Richard De Jarnette's K Street house. It had seemed rather a gloomy place until the genial doctor was ushered in, for when young life goes out of a home by way of the wedding route, it leaves almost as great a gap as if there had been a funeral.

The elder De Jarnette permitted himself few friends, other than those in business circles, and no intimates, if we may except the one who had come to him to-night guided by love's instinct. He and Dr. Semple had been boys together in college, had had their maiden love affairs about the same time, and had recovered from them with about the same expedition. They knew each other, as the doctor was wont to remark pleasantly, "from the ground up."

But the doctor, even while saying this, was quite aware that he did not know Richard De Jarnette from the ground down—that is to say, to the roots of his nature.

He occasionally came upon unexpected subterranean passages in the man's character, leading he knew not whither, for when upon two or three occasions he had attempted to explore these interesting byways, he had come suddenly upon a sign which said so plainly that the wayfaring man, though a fool, might read: "No trespassing allowed." And Dr. Semple, being a wise man and not a fool, always made haste to vacate when he saw this legend. He knew, what the rest of their world knew, that Richard De Jarnette was a rising business man, of strict integrity and tireless energy, and he knew what their world did not know, that there had been a time when his life had not been bounded by the four walls of his office, or the prim severity of a home presided over by a housekeeper,—a time when he had had his dreams like the rest. Then when he had not much more than made his masculine début into society, he had suddenly dropped from its ranks and given himself thenceforward wholly to business. There had been some speculation about the cause of this sudden lapse of interest, even among his male acquaintances, and more, of course, among those of the sex which is rightly supposed to have greater curiosity upon these subjects. But it is a very busy world. Broken ranks in any procession soon fill up,—and nobody sought him out in his seclusion save Dr. Semple.

He had never been a very successful society man, in truth having few of the social gifts which are there more imperative than either character or learning. And besides, he had no real love for it, and people rarely excel in the thing to which they are indifferent. Since his unceremonious dropping out he had devoted himself exclusively to business and his books. His one friend was Dr. Semple, —his one passion, his love for his young half-brother, who had shared his home since the death of their father.

"Of course that is n't your real reason for opposing this marriage, De Jarnette," said the doctor, easily. "I understand that. You don't want him to marry at all, and you know it."

Mr. De Jarnette smiled grimly.

"I admit it. I have made no pretence of denying it to myself, and since you seem rather skilful at diagnosis, I suppose it is not worth while to deny it to you. The truth is, Semple," the explanatory tone had in it almost an appeal, "I have looked out for this boy's welfare since the day—" his face darkened—"the day he so sorely needed it. I—I suppose I have got in the habit of it."

"You 've spoiled him. There 's no doubt of that," agreed his companion cheerfully. "But I should think that now you would be glad to see his future in the hands of a good woman like Margaret Varnum. It is a safeguard, Dick,—one that you and I have n't availed ourselves of, it is true, but still a safeguard. I am sure of it."

"You are sure of nothing where a woman is concerned," declared Richard De Jarnette, deliberately. "You may think you are, listening to their protestations, but you will find out your mistake sooner or later. They are treacherous, Bob. You cast your pearls before them and when they find they are not diamonds, they turn and rend you. I know them. They are not to be trusted."

"There are women and women, I suppose. You will agree that there are several varieties of men. There is Slyter, for instance."

"Slyter is a beast," said Mr. De Jarnette, with a gesture of disgust.

"He belongs to our sex. We can't disown him, much as we would like to. But we would hardly wish to be judged by him. If you belonged to my profession, De Jarnette, you would know women better and do them more justice."

"I know them—know them better than you do. At least, I know a side of them that you have never seen because you have never been to school to them."

Dr. Semple threw his head back and blew out slowly what seemed to be an inexhaustible volume of smoke. Every thought seemed concentrated upon it. When the last of it had floated off into thin air he remarked quietly, "You have never quite got over it, Dick."

He had deliberately pushed aside the sign and walked into the forbidden grounds. Somewhat to his surprise, for he hardly knew himself how it would be taken, he found his friend walking by his side.

Mr. De Jarnette flipped the ash from his cigar and then answered composedly, "I have got over it so entirely that the sight of her causes no more commotion in my breast than the vision of the scrub lady who daily puts the outer hall in order. I hope you are wasting no sympathy upon me. I have n't even any bitterness about it,—and certainly no regret. It has simply left me with more knowledge of women. That is all. And that is worth all it cost. It is what has rendered me immune all these years. 'A burnt child,' you know."

An expression of curious relief came into the physician's face.

"Do you know, Dick, I have always had a lingering ghost of a fear—now that she is a widow—and it would be possible, don't you know, that—"

"Bah-h! I beg you will not do me the injustice of the thought. Do you know, Semple, the incomprehensible thing about it now to me is that I should ever have wasted love upon her. I have asked myself a hundred times what it was I thought I loved and where it had gone. That is where the sting of it comes in. It is n't that she should have thrown me over for the old man and his millions,

—but that I should n't have known from the first that she was n't—oh, well! It is over. It is just exactly with me as though it had never been, except—"

"Except—"

"—that I am wiser."

"But not better," thought the physician. "The trouble about these things is that they never leave a man the same. Something is always burned out of him." Aloud he said, "She is only one woman, Dick. A man always has a mother."

Richard De Jarnette's face softened less than one would suppose.

"My mother was but a name to me," he said. "She died in giving me birth. I have—"

"Then by her birth pangs she has made you a debtor to all womankind," interrupted the doctor, a little sternly, "and if she gave her life for yours—"

"I do not acknowledge the indebtedness," his host returned, coldly. "I did not ask to be brought into this world. Now that I am here I can do nothing less than try to keep myself up, but I do not see that I have any special cause for gratitude to the ones who imposed this responsibility upon me."

"If your mother had lived, De Jarnette, you would have felt differently," said the doctor, quietly, almost gently. "You would have known then, as you never can now, the breadth and depth of a mother's devotion."

"You forget that my father was thoughtful enough to provide me with a second mother. And since I recall it, perhaps you may remember the depth of that mother's devotion to *her* child."

He spoke with bitterest satire.

"I have only heard rumors about it," answered his friend.

"I 'll tell you that story. A few words will do. The mother that my father gave me when I was nine years old, set herself first of all to alienate his affections from me, his child, and succeeded."

"She would have failed if he had been your mother," interjected the doctor in the slight pause.

"I am not sure of that, though I mean no disrespect to a mother who was buried too deep to rescue her child from all the indignities that woman heaped upon him. I will pass quickly over that, Semple. To this day it hurts me to think of it. I have never seen a man cruel to a child since without wanting to kill him, and a woman—"

"Was it the same after her own child came?"

"It was worse. She was jealous then in addition to being vindictive. If she had only been cruel to me and kind to him, I believe I could have stood it. For I loved that boy as I have loved few things in life. But she was cruel to him too. She neglected him. And finally—well, you know how it ended. Everybody knows the dishonor she brought on the name of De Jarnette. That is one thing I hate her for. From the time she left her child, a helpless baby of four years, I have had no faith in so-called mother-love. It is good to talk about. It sounds well. It is all right till the test comes—and sometimes the test never does come—but if it does, they 'll fly the track every time. You can't depend on a woman. They are treacherous."

"What effect did her going away have on your father —in his relations to you, I mean? Did it bring his affections back to you?"

"No. You would suppose it would have had that effect, but it did n't. It made him misanthropic and hard. He could not bear Victor in his sight. The child seemed to be a constant reminder of the mother and the disgrace

she had brought upon him. Then it was that I got into the habit of looking out for him. My father was a hard man—an unforgiving man. He ruled with a rod of iron. I 've taken many a whipping that would have fallen upon Victor, small as he was, if I had n't lied for him."

"Perhaps you would have done him better service to have let them fall upon him," the doctor was thinking.

"You see how it is, Bob. That is why he has always seemed so close to me. I really think of him more as my child than my half-brother. And that 's why it hurts. . . . Oh, well! If he had only waited a few years I think I could have consented to it with a better grace. But my consent was n't asked."

On his way home Dr. Semple looked at it with a professional eye. "The man has a wrong bias," he said, at last. "It was a case of malpractice, and it has left him with his nature out of joint. If he could have a hard enough wrench in the right hands it might be re-set. But where is the surgeon?" Then he went back to the cause. "Women are accountable for a deal of evil in this world. And it does n't all come by 'ordinary generation,' as the catechism puts it. Oh, well!"

CHAPTER III

MRS. PENNYBACKER OF MISSOURI

TWO or three weeks after the wedding Mrs. Pennybacker sat with her niece in the elegantly appointed library of the mansion that old Cornelius Van Dorn had left to his bereaved widow.

Mrs. Van Dorn had enjoyed her crape, and was now in the softly alleviated stage of violet and heliotrope, which looked so well on her that she was tempted to prolong indefinitely this twilight of her grief. Certainly nothing could be more bewitching than the lavender housegown which enveloped her to-day, with its falls and cascades of soft lace and its coquettish velvet bows.

She was smiling complacently just now at this blond-haired reflection in the mirror as she leaned on the mantel.

"No, I don't believe I shall take off my mourning for another year," she said, half aloud, turning her head a little to one side to adjust a bow in her hair, "at least, not quite. Then perhaps I shall have a season of grays—a velvet hat with long feathers and a cut steel ornament. Soft shades are certainly becoming to me—and I dislike to see people rush into colors immediately, as if they had no feeling at all." The widowed lady sighed softly, as was her wont when referring to her bereavement. It seemed to go well with lavender.

"Your love for purple, Maria," observed Mrs. Pennybacker, ignoring the sentiment of these remarks and grasping promptly their salient point, as was her wont, "is

an inherited one. Your mother used to feel when she had on a new purple calico or lawn that she was about as fine as they made them. And if she could get hold of a purple ribbon—"

"Aunt Mary," said Mrs. Van Dorn, in polite exasperation, "if you have to refer to those old days and what you wore, why don't you speak of muslins and organdies instead of calicoes and such things?"

"Because they were not muslins and organdies. They were calicoes and lawns—ten-cent lawns at that, and mighty glad we were to get them."

"Well!" ejaculated Mrs. Van Dorn, in marked disgust, "I can't see any good in constantly advertising the fact, any more than I can see why you should say, as you did to Congressman Andrews last night, that you were from 'Possum Kingdom.'"

Mrs. Pennybacker's lips twitched in a reminiscent smile. "I did that to be explicit. He wanted to know what part of Callaway I was from and I had to tell him. I could n't dodge. I *was* born in 'Possum Kingdom.' I thought he seemed to enjoy hearing about it."

"Enjoy it? Yes—at your expense."

"I did n't mind, Maria. It started us on a very mirthful talk. You ought to be thankful that I did n't tell him you were born there too."

"I don't want you ever to tell that to anybody. I am not a Missourian. I am a Washingtonian."

"Maria," said Mrs. Pennybacker, firmly, "you *are* a Missourian. It is too late now for you to select a birthplace. If you ever get into Statuary Hall (which I somewhat doubt) you will have to be written down from 'Possum Kingdom,' for there you were born."

Mrs. Van Dorn contented herself with a sniff.

"Anyway," continued Mrs. Pennybacker, argumenta-

tively, "I don't see why one would n't rather have been born in a great sovereign state like Missouri—an empire in itself—than in a little two by four asparagus bed set like a patch on top of two other states, and not set straight at that. I never had any opinion of people who are ashamed of their native state, even if that was a state of poverty, and yours was a State of affluence."

"If you call calico and ten-cent lawn affluence—" began Mrs. Van Dorn.

"I was speaking of the commonwealth, Maria," Mrs. Pennybacker explained, with suspicious mildness, "a State of affluence written with a capital."

"I never even let Richard De Jarnette know I was from Missouri all the time he was coming to see me. I told him my mother was a Virginian, which was the truth. And that I was a Washingtonian."

"Which was—?"

"Oh, I suppose so. . . . And I have never let one soul know, Aunt Mary, where you are from."

Mrs. Pennybacker faced her. "You have n't! Well, if I were not going home to-morrow I should make a point of telling every acquaintance you have. Do you think I am ashamed of Missouri? I should as soon think of disowning the mother that bore me. Why should you hesitate to tell Mr. De Jarnette where you were from?"

"I thought a good deal about his opinion in those days, and—"

"Is he as provincial as all that?"

"He has always lived in the East and you know how Eastern people feel about the West."

"I *don't* know how they feel. But I know how they might feel if they knew anything about it. If the World's Fair is held in Chicago, I suspect it will open their eyes to a few things. Where are these De Jarnettes from?"

"It is an old Maryland family. There are just two of them left now, Richard and Victor. The father died years ago, leaving a large estate to his sons. Then Richard is wealthy in his own right. His property comes mainly from an aunt who did not like Victor's mother. . . . No, they are only half-brothers. Victor has n't nearly so much money as Richard. It turns out that Richard has so much more than anybody ever supposed he had years ago." Mrs. Van Dorn's mouth sank into a slightly regretful droop, as if the subject had its stings.

"Maria, you remind me of a woman I used to know in Missouri. Whenever a girl was married and anybody asked this old lady how she had done, she always said, in her slow drawl, 'Well, I really don't know how much the man is worth.' What is there to these De Jarnettes besides money? I want to know something about Margaret's chances for happiness."

"Oh, it is a fine family. She has done well. I really think that Richard has shown himself sometimes quite hard, but the two are not at all alike. Victor's mother was a French woman, or of French descent. That is where he gets his complexion, I suppose,—and perhaps his morals, for I guess he has been pretty fast. There was an awful scandal about his mother years ago, I 've heard. Of course Richard never mentioned it to me, but I know he hates her like poison. I think she went off with another man or something like that—some dreadful thing that could n't be talked about above your breath. Anyway, she disappeared and never came back—left her child—and all that. The story goes that she wanted to come back after a while, but old Mr. De Jarnette never forgave her. I think they really are very unforgiving—Richard has proved *himself* so. Yes, the boys were raised by the father and a negro nurse. They have a beautiful

estate out here in Maryland—Elmhurst. Richard keeps it up and stays out there in the summer, or at least he did when I had an interest in him, which was ages ago."

"How old is Victor De Jarnette?"

"Twenty-one. He just came into his money last winter. He is two years older than Margaret."

Mrs. Pennybacker shook her head. "Too young entirely."

"Richard is ten years older than Victor. If she could have got him now,—but—" Mrs. Van Dorn tossed her pretty head—"I don't believe anybody will ever capture Richard De Jarnette, unless—"

The sentence was unfinished, but she looked demurely at the lavender reflection in the mirror opposite. It is hard for a woman to forget a man who has once been at her feet.

After a long silence Mrs. Pennybacker, who had evidently been pondering something, said abruptly, "Maria, where did you say Margaret's new home was? I think I shall go to see her this afternoon."

"Why, Aunt Mary, you can't. She is n't at home until September."

"But I am going away tomorrow. I can't hang around here till September. And I am an old, old friend of her mother's. Don't you think she would excuse the informality under the circumstances?"

"Certainly not. You ought n't to think of going."

"Very well," said Mrs. Pennybacker, "perhaps you are right. What did you say was her number? I may want to write to her some time."

She acquiesced in the proposed restriction of her movements without further remonstrance and an hour later sallied forth, address in hand, to find Margaret De Jarnette.

"That 's always the best way to conduct a discussion with Maria," she said to herself. "It saves time and temper."

A FAIRER sight than Washington in May it would be hard to find. Too many of our great cities are but stupendous aggregations of brick and mortar, of flagstones and concrete, of elevators that climb to dizzy heights, and dark stairways which lead to a teeming under-world. Most of them, if called upon to give their own biographies, could do it as tersely and as truthfully as did Topsy, and in her immortal words,—"I jes growed."

But fortunately the nation's capital was planned, and wisely planned, by a far-seeing brain, which beheld with the eye of faith while yet they were not, broad-shaded avenues flung out across the checkerboard of streets like green-bordered ribbons radiating in all directions from that massive pile which is to all good Americans (in spite of Dr. Holmes and Boston's claims) the true hub of our special universe. It is these transverse avenues which make the special beauty and distinction of the capital city —not in themselves alone, but in the miniature parks and triangular bits of greenery that they leave in their wake.

It was up Massachusetts Avenue, one of the most beautiful of them all, that Mrs. Pennybacker wended her way, consulting from time to time a card she held in her hand. She stopped at last at the door of a gray stone house, shaded by a row of elms. The "parking," as they call it, is rather wide on Massachusetts Avenue, and the lawn was green and well kept. There was an air of quiet elegance about the place that pleased Mrs. Pennybacker. "The exterior is all that can be desired, at any rate," she commented.

She sent up her card and waited in the parlor. The

boy returned to say that Mrs. De Jarnette would be down immediately. When he was gone, Mrs. Pennybacker began a close perusal, so to speak, of her surroundings.

"A beautiful room," she announced to herself at length, "a beautiful room. For myself, I don't know that I like this Persian rug as well as I would a good body brussels that covered the whole floor, but that is only my taste. You have to get used to bare spots on a floor before you really appreciate them, I suppose. . . . Well, if happiness lies in things (and I am not surer of anything in this world than that it does n't) Margaret will be very happy here. I wish I felt sure of—"

The sentence was unfinished. At this moment a slight lithe figure ran swiftly down the stairs and fell upon her in the most unceremonious manner.

"I am so glad to see you! You are the Mrs. Pennybacker from Missouri who was my mother's old friend, are n't you? I have heard my father speak of you so often."

"You take a different view of it from my niece, Mrs. Van Dorn," said Mrs. Pennybacker, after the greetings were over. "She said it would n't do at all for me to come. In fact, I ran off to do it."

"I am so glad you did," laughed Margaret. "I would n't have missed your visit for anything. I wish you could have been at my wedding."

"I was. I have made it a point in a long life never to miss anything that I can see legitimately and respectably. My niece secured an invitation for me. I supposed you knew."

"Was that for you? I remember Mrs. Van Dorn's asking permission to bring a friend, but I did not dream that it was anybody I ought to know."

"I live in an obscure place," Mrs. Pennybacker ex-

plained, "and Maria seems to associate obscurity with disreputableness. It is one of her little peculiarities not to wish it known that she has friends in Missouri. Oh, no, I don't mind." Then, dismissing Mrs. Van Dorn and her peculiarities, "You are very much like your mother, my dear."

"Oh, do you think so? I am always glad to be told that—although I know so little about her myself. Do you think I look like her or is it my manner?"

Mrs. Pennybacker scanned critically the bright face opposite.

"Both. You are taller, I think, but you have her supple grace—I noticed it as you ran down the stairs—and her animation. I am glad of that, for it was one of her greatest charms."

Margaret laughed. "I 'm afraid I have too much animation,—but I can't help it. You see I feel things rather intensely. My enjoyment is so real that I don't know how to keep from showing it."

"I hope you will never learn. A fresh enthusiasm about everything as it comes, and a capacity to enjoy, are among God's best gifts to us. They have but one drawback."

"And that is—?"

"A corresponding capacity for suffering," said Mrs. Pennybacker, with sudden gravity, as she looked into the young face. "Those two characteristics often go together. But don't be afraid to enjoy with intensity, my dear. It is about that as it is with brilliant color. You often hear girls bewail their pink cheeks, but time almost always tones it down, Margaret. I may call you that, may I not? It almost seems to me that the years have been obliterated and that your mother is beside me."

"Oh, I want you to call me that. It is so lovely to see somebody that knew my mother. You always continued friends, did n't you? Nothing ever came between you?"

"Nothing—not even death. She seems close to me now, as I sit looking at you."

Impulsively Margaret threw her arms around her mother's friend. "Oh, you bring her closer to me than she has ever been in all my life. Tell me about her."

They sat long together, the older woman living over for the girl the life of the mother she had never known, —her girlhood, the marriage, the brief wedded life, and its untimely close.

"I love to hear you tell about it," Margaret said, a tender light in her eyes. "I have known so little of my mother. Somehow father never talked with me much about her. I think it hurt him to remember."

"He was very fond of her," Mrs. Pennybacker said, "and she of him. I never knew a purer love match, nor a happier married life."

"And yet she had to give it up so soon. Oh, Mrs. Pennybacker, it seems to me the *saddest* thing to want to live and have to die! I don't think anything could be harder than that."

"Yes. There is something harder than that, Margaret. It is to want to die and have to live."

Margaret's face expressed incredulity.

Her head was thrown back with a gesture that was habitual with her, and her eyes shining.

"You are very happy, Margaret?" said Mrs. Pennybacker, softly.

"I don't think anybody could be happier. It almost frightens me sometimes to think how happy. You see, my husband—" she said it in the pretty, hesitating way that young girls use who have not yet got accustomed to the word,—"my husband is so good to me. It seems so blessed to have somebody's tender care around me all the time. I think that is what makes a woman love a man, don't you? . . . And then I am so glad to have a

home. I have never had a home since father died. I don't mean to say that they were not everything to me at Judge Kirtley's that friends could be—you understand that—but they were not my very own, nor I theirs. And I had mourned for father so—had missed him so desperately. I thought of that time when you were speaking of a capacity for suffering. But after a while—well, you know how those things go. While I did not forget him, after a while the world did not seem quite so black, and gradually—"

"Yes, child, I know.

'Joy comes, grief goes,—we know not how.' "

"That is just it exactly. That is Lowell, is n't it? Then when Victor came into my life— Mrs. Pennybacker, do you know I think Victor is going to be so much like father in his home."

"I hope so," returned Mrs. Pennybacker, but the face of the bridegroom at St. John's rose before her mental vision, and her hope was without the element of faith.

"Mrs. Pennybacker, do you suppose father knows? I hope he does. I am almost ashamed to tell you this for fear you will think me silly, but sometimes when Victor has just gone—has told me good-bye for the day, and that he will hurry back as soon as he can, and all that, you know—and it rushes over me so—the blessedness of having a love like his, and a dear home that is to be ours forever—I am—my heart is so overflowing with joy that I go to my room and drop down by the couch and whisper softly, 'Father! I am so happy! Can you hear me, dearest?' "

She dashed the tears from her eyes and smiled through wet lashes. "I know it is foolish, Mrs. Pennybacker, and

I can't see how I came to be telling it all to you—but I feel as if I want father to know. Do you think he does?"

"I am not much of a Spiritualist, Margaret," returned Mrs. Pennybacker, guardedly. "The dye from which my religious faith took its color was very blue,—but certainly if there is such a thing as communion between the living and the dead—or rather the living here and the living there—it would come in answer to a whisper like that."

There were tears in the eyes of both. The elder woman was thinking, "Oh, I hope it will last!"

But she only said, "You did not take a wedding journey?"

"No. Victor wanted me to go abroad, but I could not bear the thought of going anywhere just at first. I was so eager to get things arranged in our home. We had so many pretty bridal gifts that I was just crazy to see how they would look. I felt that I would rather fix up this home than do anything in the world. Then, too, I hated to go away at this time of the year. Of course we will go later, but May is so beautiful in Washington."

"Yes," Mrs. Pennybacker said, softly,—with all her practicality and candid speech there was an unworked vein of sentiment about her, "yes, May is beautiful everywhere—even in Life's calendar."

It did seem that in that home there was not one thing lacking; everything was there that heart could desire, taste suggest, or money secure; and the mistress's pride and joy in it all were so spontaneous, so exuberant, her realization of the blessedness of her new life so vivid, that only a croaker or a keen student of human life would have had a thought of the transitory nature of all things.

And yet—

By an impulse for which she herself could not account,

Mrs. Pennybacker turned again to the girl to whom she had said good-by and took both her hands.

"My dear," she said, "my home is in an obscure spot. One can hardly find it on the map. But for you its doors are always open. If you ever need a friend, come to me."

"How queer!" mused Margaret when she was gone. "I wonder how she came to say that. Well, with all her oddity, I like her."

CHAPTER IV

THE THORN ROAD

CERTAINLY there was nothing on Margaret De Jarnette's horizon at present that was a forecast of falling weather. The skies were blue, the air clear, and over all the life-giving sunshine of love and trust which was starting every plant in her home garden to budding. The program agreed upon in those ante-nuptial days was carried out, and while friends were wondering where the two had gone for their wedding journey, they were quietly settling themselves in their new home and into each other's lives.

To Margaret the place on Massachusetts Avenue was the House Beautiful. The home-building instinct was strong within her, and she took a bird's delight in fashioning her nest. If Victor's pleasure in it all did not seem so keen as hers, she did not perceive it. When he came at night she flitted from one room to another, convoying him along to show him how this straw had been changed and this wisp of hay added, and as he looked and listened she did not doubt that it was together they were building their nest.

The evenings of that matchless May and June were full of peaceful joy,—long drives through Rock Creek Park or the beautiful winding ways of the Soldiers' Home, with now and then a row upon the river past old Georgetown, with its windows blinking at the setting sun, and

back again when it lay steeped in moonlight, and they floated lazily down toward the Monument which dominated the landscape whichever way they turned,—heeding not time nor aught else so that only they were together and away from all the world. Ah! it was idyllic while it lasted, but it palled at last, the least bit, upon Victor, and then they sought the seashore, Margaret saying to herself that it was her choice to go.

At the seashore, as it chanced, there was a gay crowd from Baltimore that Victor knew, and things gave promise of being very pleasant, but unfortunately Margaret was not well when they first reached the place, nor for some time afterwards—not ill enough to hinder Victor's going, as she insisted earnestly, but in a way that kept her quiet upon the hotel piazza. She was not strong enough to take the jaunts the others enjoyed. Victor demurred at first, saying he would not thing of leaving her, but it was a very pleasant party, and men are always in demand at seaside resorts. So in the end he went.

The Baltimore party was not going to remain long and they made hay with a zest that was fatiguing to one not quite robust.

One morning, as Margaret sat on the piazza watching the waves roll in and back, in and back, with a ceaseless energy that somehow seemed so futile, always trying to do something, but never accomplishing it. Victor came out from the smoking-room and threw himself at her feet on the steps.

"How are you feeling by this time, sweetheart?" he asked, with a tenderness that somehow seemed to belong to Washington and the Maytime rather than this crowded summer hotel. It brought quick tears to her eyes. The girl was very weak.

"Rather better, thank you," she said, smiling down at him in a languid way that belied her words.

"It is deucedly unfortunate about your having this little attack just now," he said, fanning himself with his hat and frowning a little. He was very young. "You are losing so many good times."

"I am living on the memory of our good times in Washington," Margaret said. Which was truer than she knew.

"Oh! They were all right, were n't they? We did have a good time. It 's a pity that kind of thing can't last. But you see if you felt equal to it you could have some good times now of a different sort. Dillingham wants us to go on a yachting trip."

"When?" Margaret asked it rather listlessly.

"To-morrow. It 's going to be an awfully jolly party. They are going for an all-day's trip—luncheon on the yacht and all that. How do you feel about it?"

"Victor, I could not possibly go. I am not well enough.

He bit his lip and looked annoyed.

"But I should not want to interfere with your going," she said, quickly, noticing the look. "There is no reason why it should."

"Oh, no, I 'll stay—of course," he replied. "I could n't go off for a good time and leave you here sick. It would n't be right. But it is unfortunate, as I was saying. You know I am specially fond of yachting, and—"

"And I want you to go. I really would much rather you would."

He made some faint opposition, which only stimulated her determination that he should take the trip. At last he said, "Well—I don't know—perhaps I will after all, just to please Dillingham. He was anxious that I should go to even up the party." And Margaret thought quickly, "Then they did not even expect me to go."

"You are sure you won't be lonely without anybody to talk to?"

"I will let the sea talk to me," Margaret said.

The sea talked to her a good deal that summer. When the Baltimore party was gone and she was well enough to go about, Victor had formed the acquaintance of certain gentlemen who were fond of cards and pool, and she had many leisure hours for communion with it. What it told her she never repeated. If she said anything to it in reply, it was with silent speech, until one day as she stood looking out over its lonely wastes, she suddenly clasped her hands and pressed them to her breast, whispering brokenly, "He is—so *different*—from father!"

They went back in September,—Margaret gladly. In their own home they would fall back into the blissful life that had been theirs at first. Somehow it seemed to be slipping away from them. A hotel was no place to live. When they were at home again she would try hard to get it back. Why should her husband be less thoughtful, less tender of her now than then,—now when she needed it more? She had heard of married people growing apart —even when there seemed to be no special trouble between them. Oh, how wretched that would be! how intolerable! They must not do that! She would make his home bright and attractive. She had read that it was always a woman's fault if her husband's interest waned,—it was because she did not meet him at the door with a smile, and have his slippers warming on the hearth, and wear a white dress with a red rose at the belt, and another in her hair. But then one could hardly remember all the things the books said women must do to hold the love their husbands had poured out upon them so unstintedly before marriage.

One cold, wet, disagreeable night in October Margaret had a fire lighted in the library grate. It was the first one on their own hearth, and she had not yet got over the

charm of "first things." It seemed to her when they came into the room that she had never seen a sweeter, more attractive place.

"Do you remember what Holmes says his idea of comfort is?" she asked, turning to Victor brightly as they sat down before the glowing coals.

"No. What is it?"

"'Four feet on a fender.' Is n't that epigrammatic and —and full of tenderness?"

"It is epigrammatic, all right. I can't quite see the tenderness. You will have to explain."

She shook her head, with the ghost of a smile.

"There are some things that can't be explained, Victor, —the humor of a joke, for instance. If you don't see it, it is n't there—for you."

Somehow her reply embarrassed him. He felt that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and he could not see why.

"You quote Holmes a good deal, don't you?"

"Yes. He says such bright things." And she added eagerly, "Victor, let us read some together this winter. Father and I used to have such good times reading together."

Victor put up his hand as if to ward off an attack.

"Really, Margaret, don't you think you are asking a little too much of me? to settle down to evenings of reading the Autocrat! If you would suggest having some people in to play cards now."

"Very well," she returned, quietly, "we will have some people in to play cards then."

"I am afraid I can't count upon all my evenings," he said, hastily. "I find that things have accumulated in my absence, and I will have to be at the office occasionally at night. Not often, but sometimes."

"I should not want to interfere with your business, Victor, but—"

"Well? What 's the rest of it?"

"I was going to say that the men I have known best have been able to work enough in the day and give their evenings to their families."

She paused a moment during which she thought, "I certainly have a right to say this—and it ought to be said. I am not complaining. We ought to plan out our life together." Aloud she continued, "That has always seemed to me the right way. I think so much depends now upon our starting right."

He rose hastily. "We will talk that over some other time. I really have to go down to-night. I have promised to meet a man. You don't object? You will not be afraid?"

"I shall not be afraid," she said.

She went to the door with him and stood looking after him until he disappeared. When she came back she was shivering a little. She sat before the fire and looked into its depths. Then she raised the skirt of her dainty housegown and rested her slippered feet on the brass that was burnished until it shone.

"*Two* feet on a fender," she said with a dreary little smile.

She reasoned with herself afterwards. "It may not be the best way to do—to live—"she told herself, "but I hope I am womanly enough not to be jealous of my husband's business."

Some months later Mrs. Kirtley remarked to her husband, "Victor De Jarnette must be doing very well in his business. Margaret tells me that he has to go to the office almost every night of late, there is such a rush of work. Poor child! She is not well, and is nervous at

being alone, though she is very brave about it. I think he should be at home more just now—a man of his means—even if he has to sacrifice his business somewhat. I hope he will not become too mercenary."

"I hardly think he will," the Judge responded, dryly. But with the loyalty of one man for another, even when that other is unworthy, he said no more. Inwardly he was groaning, "Just as I feared. Too bad! That young man had a good case and he is letting it go by default. Margaret is not the woman to stand this when she finds out."

It is an evil hour for a man when a woman takes to her hungry heart a substitute for the affection he withholds, but when the thing substituted is an innocent thing it is a godsend to the woman. A plant if denied the light on one side will turn this way and that. When it cannot get it in any direction it dies.

As the months went by, Margaret passed through deep and changing experiences. First there was a period of bewilderment. What had she done that should make this difference in Victor? He had been her persistent wooer before marriage. Was the case now to be reversed? Her pride revolted, but her instinct told her that if the fire on their domestic altar was not to die out she would be the one to fan the flame. She deliberately and with purpose aforethought set herself to hold her husband's love. It seemed to her almost humiliating that she should have to fight this fight,—but how could she bear a loveless home?

That she was only in part successful she could not fail to see, the plain truth being that Victor De Jarnette was restive under the bonds that bound him to one woman and a home, being of that masculine type which desires the pleasures of the married state and the liberty of bachelor-

hood. He did not intend to be unkind, but he intended to have his liberty. And the two involved a nice adjustment that, as yet, Margaret had not learned to comprehend.

To this period of bewilderment and baffled endeavor succeeded one of apathy. Her sensibilities seemed blunted. What was at first a sharp, intolerable pain became later a dull ache. Nothing seemed to matter much. Mrs. Kirtley was concerned, and told her she needed a tonic, but Margaret shook her head. It was a comfort, anyway, to find that she did not care as much as she did at first. That, she told herself, would have been unbearable,—that would have been against nature. Perhaps she would get so after a while that she would not care at all. She had seen some married people who appeared entirely indifferent to each other,—the woman led her life and the man his. And yet they got along at least respectably. . . . After all, she thought with a slight shiver, it must be a gray life—she had not thought that hers would be like that! Perhaps it was just her physical lassitude that made her feel so dead. She lay hours at a time on the couch when Victor was gone, thinking nothing, feeling nothing, hoping nothing.

Then one day a beautiful thing happened to Margaret; a soft wind rose that blew away the deadly miasma fastening upon her. It stirred within the closed chambers of her heart, making them sweet and pure again, and softly fanning open others that she had not known were there. And from these unsuspected chambers came soft voices whispering to her of hope that was not dead, they told her, it would spring again—and a sweet tale of joy that was to be—something so untried, so mysterious, that the very thought thrilled her as in all her life she had never been thrilled before. Then as she bent to listen, the soft whisperings swelled to sweetest music, and a heavenly chorus sang:

"Blessed—blessed—blessed art thou!"

And Margaret, listening with rapt ear, cried out in ecstasy from the great deeps of her lonely heart, "My own . . . my very own?" and then upon her knees took up the great antiphonal,

"My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Ah! the angel of the annunciation had spoken to Margaret and her heart was singing the Magnificat.

CHAPTER V

"A WHITE LIFE FOR TWO"

MONTHS came and went—months in which they each tried intermittently to regain their old footing of love and faith. They could not do it. The wife at least knew that they were drifting apart. She wondered sometimes where it would all end.

Victor had told Margaret one morning that he had been called to Philadelphia on business and would not be at home for several days perhaps. A friend called for her that afternoon to drive. She did not go out often now, and, of course, Victor had no thought that she would take this time of all times.

She came upon him in Rock Creek Park. He too was driving, and beside him was a woman she had heard lightly spoken of. He did not see her, nor did the friend see him. It was but a moment, but in that brief space she had pressed to her lips the fruit plucked from the Tree of Knowledge. Margaret wondered, as she felt the world swim around her, what it was her friend was saying, and what made it sound so far off, and whether she would know enough to answer her.

They had a bitter time over that. He first denied, then attempted to explain, and finally fell back upon her foolish jealousy, forgetting that it is a poor bloodless type

of woman that will not be jealous when occasion exists. From that time on she had been steering wildly, her rudder gone.

The storm fell on her with as little warning. The winter passed, spring came. It was almost Mayday and her anniversary. Victor had seemed more thoughtful of her of late,—perhaps her weakness appealed even to him. Soon—soon—she told herself, they would be drawn closer together by their common joy and care.

In the afternoon she was called to the telephone. It was her brother-in-law, Mr. De Jarnette, who was speaking. He called her up to say that Victor would not be home to dinner and perhaps not until quite late. He had had to go to Baltimore upon a business matter that could not be postponed, and he had just had a message from him saying that he (Richard) would have to come over, too, in order to make the deal go through. There was a possibility—a bare possibility—that they might not be able to get through in time to get back that night, but in that case Victor would telegraph her along in the afternoon. He was telling her about it now so that if the telegram came she would not feel alarmed. Perhaps she had better telephone to Judge and Mrs. Kirtley to come over and stay with her until Victor got back. Oh, no, she replied, she would not be at all afraid. She sat down thinking with a sudden pang how strange it would seem to have somebody looking out for her comfort all the time. Victor often stayed out as late as that. Suddenly she felt appalled to perceive how certain she felt that this was the truth. She had not even questioned it.

Margaret did not know her brother-in-law very well. He had been to the house a few times, but always in a perfunctory way. She felt that he would have prevented the marriage if he could, and this had always stood be-

tween them. His considerate thoughtfulness of her was most unexpected.

Toward night the telegram came. Margaret opened it without looking at the address. She stared at it uncomprehendingly at first. It was signed by the woman she had seen in Rock Creek Park, and it should have gone to the office.

When Victor De Jarnette got home in the early evening his wife was waiting for him with the telegram in her hand. It is not the purpose of this narrative to give that interview. There were pointed questions and evasive answers. There were criminations and recriminations on one side, and shuffling, prevarication, and finally defiance on the other.

"Women expect too much," Victor said, harshly, at last. "If they demanded less they would get more."

"I am not speaking of women—nor of unreasonable demands," she said. "Perhaps they do—I don't know. But Victor!" Margaret spoke with impassioned pleading, "*I* ask only the same fidelity I give. Is that too much?"

She faced him squarely with the question, her eyes burning into his very soul. Only the clock's tick broke the silence. Upon his answer, in word and deed, hung the destiny of his life and hers; of his home and hers; of his child, his unborn child, and hers.

"Is that too much?" she repeated.

He temporized.

"It is more than most women get. I can tell you that."

"Don't put me off. Is it more than I will get?" Her breast was heaving and her breath coming hard.

"Oh, Margaret, don't go into heroics!" he cried. "Listen to reason! Men can't be bound down by a woman's code of morals. They never have been, and

they never will be. And women might as well understand it."

"Then marriage is a lie and a cheat!" she cried with vehemence. "You take the same vow that we do, and you take them saying to yourselves that you will keep them only so long as you chose, and will break them at your will! . . . . But we—poor fools! we speak those vows with bated breath and souls bared before God, and mean to keep them—strive to keep them even when—"

"Is it such a struggle?" he asked, sneeringly.

"—even when faith in you is dead or dying. Yes. It is a struggle then. 'Love, honor, and obey!' Bah!"

"Well," he said, stung by her scorn, but carrying it off insolently, "in the words of the illustrious Mr. Tweed, 'What are you going to do about it?'"

Had he been man enough—perhaps even had he been old enough—he would have thought of the danger to her in all this tumult of feeling and calmed her by a candid meeting of the question she had forced upon him. But he maddened her with his flippant manner and contemptuous words. And a change was going on in him too. Under his light demeanor his anger was rising. There was bad blood in Victor De Jarnette—false, cowardly blood—and it was beginning to assert itself.

"I am going to do this," she said, in a low, concentrated tone. "I demand to know what this woman is to you. I have a right to know."

"And know you shall," he answered, meeting her gaze with defiant eyes, in which every evil passion had burst into flame. "Since I am to be badgered and run to earth in my own home, know that she is a woman I love—and shall love. One that I shall go to when—and where—and as I please. The De Jarnettes are not ruled by their women!"

"Then choose between us," she said, with whitening lips, "for I swear to you by the living God I will be all or nothing to the man that calls me wife!"

They stood facing each other,—her features white and drawn, his inflamed with passion. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, a frightened sense of her own helplessness, perhaps, or possibly a surging back of her old love—for women are strange beings—she came closer to him and stretched out her hands.

"Victor! Oh, Victor!"

He thrust her aside and went out. The door clanged behind him, waking echoes in the silent house, and Margaret, suddenly strengthless, dropped in a heap on the floor, her face buried in the couch. She sat there long with hopeless eyes staring into the blackness of the morrow, saying now and then brokenly, "Father! . . . Father!"

WHITE now with anger, furious at Margaret's discovery of his falseness, and yet more furious at the necessity which her ultimatum laid upon him to amend his ways or lose his wife; unholy passion for her rival hot within him, and the vengeful blood of his race coursing tumultuously through his veins, Victor De Jarnette strode down Massachusetts Avenue almost a madman. Not for him was the soft beauty of the night—the breath of flowers, the light of stars, the play of summer breezes among the leaves. His heart was closed to the sweet influences of the Pleiades. That heart, alas! out of which are the issues of life had become a seething cauldron of fierce passions.

He did not go immediately to his office. In fact, it was hours before he did. When at last he reached the place he began tearing up letters and clearing up his desk with one eye on the clock as if in preparation for departure or

a new incumbent. His blood was still at fever heat, and his thoughts did not tend to cool it. Besides, the law of heredity was against him. What he was doing, his mother before him had done. She, too, had felt this hot surging in the veins and had given it free course. A fearful heritage is ungoverned blood.

As he opened a drawer to put away some papers his eye fell on a folded document. He looked at it absently at first, hardly aware that he saw it. Then, as the innocent looking thing forced itself upon his consciousness, he took it up and read it. How well he remembered the day it was written. A sneer curved his lips at the thought of his ecstatic state of mind at that time. Fool! Then as he looked at the paper, there suddenly leaped into his mind a cruel thought, and into his face the quick reflection of its malevolence.

He stared at the thing he held.

"I 'll do it!" he cried, bringing his clenched hand down upon the table with an oath. "I 'll show her!"

"DON'T do it, Victor!" pleaded John Jarvis, the lawyer, a half hour later, when his angry client had made his wishes known. "Don't do it! My God, man, it would be too cruel! too brutally cruel!"

"Brutal or not," swore Victor De Jarnette, "according to the laws of this District I can do it, and, by God! I will!"

"Wait till to-morrow," urged the lawyer. "You will think better of it in the morning."

"There may never be a to-morrow," Victor answered, recklessly. "I 'll make sure of it now. If you won't do it I can get somebody that will."

Before he left the attorney's office it was done, and done, alas! in due and proper form.

CHAPTER VI

A FRIEND IN NEED

WHEN Margaret woke next morning it was with a bewildered sense of something wrong,—the dull ache we have in the gray dawn before returning consciousness brings it all back to us, and makes it a sharp pain. Then, as the events of the night before came back, and the dread of to-day forced itself upon her, she closed her eyes in a sick longing to go to sleep and never wake.

This was the end! They had had words, bitter words, before—but never like this. How could she forget his cruel thrusts, his broken faith, which he had even flaunted in her face? How could the barrier between them which her passionate challenge had raised be broken down? "She must be all or nothing." Yes, and it was true! as true to-day as it was yesterday and would be for all time. Only his hand could break that barrier down. And suppose he would not . . . Well! so be it. It seemed to her that her heart was numbed and could never be warmed into life again. There rose before her a picture she had seen one day—a man with wretched face, a woman who had cast herself on a couch in an attitude suggesting the abandon of despair, and between them on the table a still form that she thought at first glance was their dead baby, only that she saw the wings and knew that it was Love—dead Love.

It was very late when she had gone to bed the night be-

fore, and still Victor had not come. She had fallen immediately into the deep sleep of exhaustion which comes to us sometimes when a crisis is past, even though it has brought the worst. Women who hang sleepless and wide-eyed over a sick-bed have been known to fall into a sleep like that of death, when all is over, their wild grief swallowed up in nature's merciful oblivion. So it had been with Margaret.

Had he come in while she slept? She stepped to her husband's door and peeped cautiously in. The bed was undisturbed. She went back to her own room and stood there shaking as with an ague. What did it mean?

Then she sat down and thought—thought deeply—going over all the wretched quarrel,—trying to judge between them, to see where—if anywhere—he was right and she was wrong. She had been passionate—yes, and had said bitter things. But they were true! And, she told herself despairingly, it was not the things they *said!* The trouble lay back of that . . . If only it had been something else! But this! . . . oh, how could she compromise? The words of that odious Mrs. Bomprey came to her—"Men are naughty creatures, my dear. Wise women learn to shut their eyes!"

"Why must they shut their eyes?" she asked, fiercely. The very insinuation was dishonoring to both. But—was the woman right?

Were all men like this? . . . Her soul grew sick. Then—no! no! *no!* she told herself in passionate protest—it was not true! She would not believe this withering, blasting thing. There was her father! Though all the world should rise up and say there was no truth in men, she still would know—there was her father!

At breakfast she said, quietly, "Mr. De Jarnette is not at home this morning. We will not wait. He has been

called away and may not be home for several days." All this with no surprise at her own power to lie without compunction.

When the meal was over she waited to give directions to the servants, as usual, speaking cheerfully to all. She could not bear the pity of her servants. Her maid, a faithful girl, came to her in her room. Could she let her go home for a while? Her mother was very ill and needed her—she hated to leave just now, and would n't, only—it was her mother. Yes, Margaret said hastily, feeling with a throb of loneliness that the ties of blood were to be nourished, not denied. Then when the girl was gone she felt bereft.

Through that long morning Margaret waited. The air she breathed was dead and deadening; she gasped sometimes for breath. It was the close, oppressive air that presages a storm. It seemed to press upon her so. She went once to the window, expecting, without knowing why, to see the lightning and to hear the thunder's roll, and felt vague surprise to see the leaves stirred by the breeze, and over all the sunlight. There was no storm.

She moved restlessly about her room, putting her drawers to rights with a strange feeling unformulated even to herself, but pressing hard, that she must put her house in order, for the end was near.

In the upper hall near her door was the telephone. She went once to it, took the receiver down, and then returned it to the hook, turning afterwards resolutely to it and telling herself, "He is my husband. It certainly is my right to know." Then to the one who answered, she said, brightly, "Will you please ask Mr. De Jarnette to come to the 'phone?"

She would not ask if he was there. To her excited imagination that would seem to imply that she did not know of his whereabouts.

The answer came.

"Is that you, Mrs. De Jarnette? Good morning, madam. . . . Why, . . . Mr. De Jarnette has n't come in yet. Probably somebody stopped him on the way down. . . . Yes. . . . Well, I will tell him when he comes in. Good-by."

Margaret looked at the clock. It was after eleven. She sat down faint and trembling. He had not been to the office.

Soon after this Judge Kirtley called to see her on some matter of business. He asked her casually about Victor, and she answered with a smile and a steady voice, feeling all the time that if he said another word she must go to him and fall upon his breast and cry aloud. Then—was she pretty well? Ah, that was good. . . . No, Mrs. Kirtley was in bed with grippe. The doctor said he should keep her there a good while. . . . Well, she must take good care of herself—patting her cheek—and —good-by.

When he was gone, Margaret had an insane desire to scream. It seemed to her that everybody was leaving her. . . . . Where was Victor?

At two o'clock Richard De Jarnette came. He found her in the library. With that strange restlessness and presentiment of coming ill which possessed her, she was looking over papers in her desk and putting things in place. A waste basket beside her was half filled with old letters. From the drawer just emptied she had taken a revolver of peculiar workmanship. It was one belonging to her husband, which he had left in the desk. She was taking it up with the intention of carrying it to his room, but when the servant announced Mr. De Jarnette, she laid it hastily on the top of the desk and put the drawer back. When she rose to meet her brother-in-law she took hold of the desk to steady herself, for she had a feeling that

this visit was upon no trifling errand. As she did so her hand touched the revolver, and she drew back.

"It is Victor's," she said, "I was putting it away."

He looked at the revolver, taking in as people do sometimes in the crises of their lives the details of its curious workmanship.

He wasted no time in formalities. He had come to ask her about Victor. Did she know anything about him—where he was?

No. She did not know he had gone away. She was controlling herself by so strong an effort that her voice sounded hard. Where was he? Had any message come from him?

Richard De Jarnette had not had much experience in dealing with women. He took from his pocket a telegram and handed it to her. It was dated New York. She held it with unsteady hand and read:

"Wire me two thousand dollars—Paris—Credit Lyonnais. Sail to-night.

Victor De Jarnette."

She grew white as the dead.

"You knew nothing of this?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"And can you give me no idea of what it means?" His voice was tense, so much so that it had the unfortunate effect of making his words sound severe.

Margaret stared at the paper, feeling the earth sway beneath her feet.

"No—unless—perhaps I ought to tell you that—we quarreled last night—a bitter quarrel—"

"Quarreled? About what?" He spoke sharply.

She lifted her head at that and looked full at him.

"About something that concerns only ourselves, I think."

"I beg your pardon. You are quite right. I did not mean to intrude, but only to find out if I could the meaning of this incomprehensible thing. I beg you to believe that I would like to serve you."

"Of course this will be known," she said, hesitatingly. "If—if it could be kept out of the papers I should be glad. It would only avert publicity for a little while—but—I might be stronger then to bear it."

"I will see to it at once. The papers will say, if you desire, that he has been called away on urgent business."

"Oh, yes, if you will be so good. I think—I hope—and still I do not know that it can ever be arranged."

As he rose to go he said after an awkward silence, "I seem unfortunate in my questions, but I hope you will not misunderstand me. Has he left you money?"

"Oh, I have money, yes. All I need. I do not misunderstand. You—you are very kind."

He bowed gravely. Then, after another silence, "Of course you know that this will mean quite an absence from home, even if he should turn around and come back as soon as he reaches the other shore." He was adding savagely to himself, "As he will when he hears from me."

"Yes, I know," murmured Margaret, faintly.

"Have you not some elderly friend that you could have with you for a while? I am sure Victor has gone off only in a spirit of pique. He was always impulsive and headstrong. If you could ask some such person—"

She shook her head.

"I am very much alone," she said. Her childish helplessness would have touched a stone. "You see I have no relatives. And Mrs. Kirtley (I am sure she would have come) is ill." She was twisting the telegram with

nervous fingers, feeling again that mad desire to scream. She felt sure she would do so if he spoke another sympathetic word.

He turned his eyes away. "I really think you should have some older woman with you, other than your maid—just now."

"My maid is gone," she said, a lump rising in her throat—repeating, "It—leaves me—very much alone."

"That settles it," he said. "I shall send my housekeeper to you from Elmhurst. She is reliable and kind. You can depend upon her fully. She has always lived with us, and there is nothing she likes so well as to mother people."

Her chin quivered like a child's. "I—I think I *need* mothering," she said.

He beat a hasty retreat. Her helplessness wrung his heart.

Two hours later Mammy Cely presented herself before Margaret—rotund of figure, dark and shining of face, thick-lipped and flat-nosed. But in her kind eyes was the brooding spirit of motherhood. Mammy Cely was of the old school. As she stood there in her clean dark gingham, white apron, white head handkerchief, and a three-cornered piece of like immaculateness crossing her breast, she was the embodiment of a past civilization, an archaic reminder of the old régime which everybody condemns, which nobody wants revived, but which has its sacred memories of friendships between high and low, that come, as all memories do, only to those who have experienced in the far past that for which the memory stands. To Margaret this humble friend was a gift from Heaven.

But all this time Mammy Cely was unobtrusively taking in the situation.

"That child 's done stood all she ken now," she was saying to herself. "Pretty soon she gwineter break down —that she is!" Aloud she remarked, respectfully, "Yaas, 'm, 't is mighty bad 'bout Mr. Victor bein' called away right now. Marse Richard was tellin' me about it. . . . But *nem*mine, honey, we gwineter s'prise him when he gits home, ain't we? We gwineter have the party all over and ever'body gone home but us and de li'l' gen'l'man." She was talking to her as one speaks to a frightened child. "There! . . . There! . . . Mammy Cely gwineter take keer of you, honey! Don't you be skeered. She done tuk keer of a heap er ladies in her day. She knows jes' what to do. You need n't to worry. She gwineter stay right here. . . . Yo' maid gone too? Well, I do say! These here triflin' Washington niggers ain't no 'count. *No* 'm, they ain't! Well, *nem*mine! I gwineter be yo' maid now—Marse Richard say so—and yo' mammy too. Then befo' I go away I 'll git you somebody ef I has to peruse this town. Yaas, 'm, I will so! I would n't stand, honey. Set down now."

She asked the frightened girl a few questions, putting in a running commentary of soothing, confidence-inspiring remarks, and Margaret found herself settling down in profound relief upon the broad foundation of her practical knowledge.

"And you got all the little clo's ready? . . . Well, I do say! Ain't they scrumptious! Humph! Jes' look at the 'shorance of them little shearts! Honey, they look lak they was holdin' out they arms for a man! . . . But I declar this here highfalutin' lacy skeart do sho'ly belong to a little lady! Well, whichever it is, honey, it 's gwineter be yourn, and when you feel that little chile on yo' breas' and hol' them little hands in yourn, you gwineter furgit all 'bout the pain and the sufferin'—and the loneliness—"

The rain clouds had been gathering all day. They could be held back no longer. Slowly, drops began to fall—the big portentous ones that come before the storm. If this new maid had come in cold and business-like she could have withstood it, but this was the mother-note she had always lacked in her life song. A convulsive sob broke from her overburdened heart, hearing which and recognizing the futility of further words, Mammy Cely opened her arms.

"Come here, lamb!"

And Margaret fell, weeping, into them.

THAT night she went down into the valley of the shadow of death, and the black woman was her rod and staff.

CHAPTER VII

TRIED AS BY FIRE

IT was long months before Margaret De Jarnette looked into her husband's face. Before that time Washington's squares and circles and triangles—those blessed breathing spots—had blossomed out from hyacinths to flaunting salvias,—a stately, gorgeous, lengthening procession proclaiming to those who understand the language or who care to hear, "He hath made all things beautiful in its time."

Gradually the soft spring air had yielded to the power that always wins, and a blistering heat had fallen on the city, the fierce rays beating down upon the asphalt streets which threw them back defiantly until the very air palpitated with the conflict. Then even the asphalt gave it up, and lay a sodden mass—no longer master of its fate, but meekly yielding to the impress of every grinding heel. The leaves hung motionless, the air was dead, and one remembered, apprehensively, that some day the earth would melt with fervent heat, and wondered, gasping, if that time were now.

Then having proved his power, old Sol relaxed his grasp, and turned away his face, and men began to hope again, and to remind one another, as the breeze sprang up, of the promise given with the bow that "While the earth remaineth . . . cold and heat, and summer and

winter . . . shall not cease." Then autumn flung her gorgeous banners to the breeze, and the Indians kindled their campfires in the West, and shouting children ploughed the streets where

> "The yellow poplar leaves came down
> And like a carpet lay."

Thus passed Nature's shifting panorama which waits no man's pleasure, stops for none, but brings all to an end at last.

To Margaret they had been months of sore trial,—of hope deferred and the suspense that kills,—the rising up each day to meet the mute sympathy of real friends, and the thin-veiled curiosity of those called friends by courtesy, who made her rage within herself and left her powerless to resent. Then there was that other sort who came to her, prating of sympathy, but telling her always of what others said. The words of a talebearer are as wounds; these went down into the innermost parts of Margaret's soul.

But through it all she carried herself with a dignity and poise that enforced respect and in time silenced even gossip. To all these invitations to confidence she made no response. She could not stop people's tongues, but she would give them no occasion to wag, by any word of hers. This thing had been between her and her husband; there it should remain. So when Marie Van Dorn came, saying effusively, "You poor child, I have heard, and came to you as soon as the nurse would let me. You can trust me, my dear!" Margaret had replied, quietly:

"Thank you. You are very kind to come to see me. I shall be a good deal housed for a while, and rather lonely in Mr. De Jarnette's absence. What do you hear from your aunt?" And Marie had made but a short call.

To Judge Kirtley, who had come as soon as she could see him, she had said, her eyes heavy with unshed tears,

"I would trust you beyond any living soul. But this is not a thing about which even you could help me. I need not tell you there is something wrong—you know that. It may come right—I can not tell. If it does, I should be sorry I had talked. If it does not, the case would not be helped by words. I cannot take the world into my confidence. Do you blame me?"

"No, dear child," he said, with an aching of his great heart, "I honor you. If more women took this stand there would be fewer cases of domestic trouble in the courts. Keep your own counsel. But when you need me, speak."

To his wife that night he said, "Margaret is a rare woman. Not one in a hundred at her age would see this as she does, and have the strength of character to lock everything in her own breast."

"Well, for my part," replied Mrs. Kirtley, who felt aggrieved at Margaret's want of confidence, "I think she is too close-mouthed. It would relieve her mind to talk to some safe confidant."

"It would relieve the mind of the safe confidant more," her husband replied, astutely. "Margaret is all right! You know what Seneca says: 'If you wish another to keep your secret, first keep it yourself.' "

"I wish you would n't always be quoting those old heathen philosophers to me," said Mrs. Kirtley, with growing irritation. She had fully expected to hear the whole story when her husband came home. She was not quite sure now that he had told all he knew.

The Judge chuckled. "My dear, if I had said Solomon instead of Seneca, I have no doubt you would have thought that you could find that in the Book of Proverbs. It is sage enough to be there. Another proverb is doubt-

less in Margaret's mind—the substance of it, at any rate, and I will relieve your perturbation by saying that this is accredited to the Talmud, and may have more weight with you than that of my good pagan. This certainly is worthy of the Wise Man:

'Thy friend hath a friend, and thy friend's friend hath a friend; so be discreet!' "

"Margaret certainly knows that she can trust us," returned his wife, indignantly.

"Could," my dear, is the better word. *Can* implies a possibility of her trying, and that, I suspect, she is not going to do for the present. Let her alone. She is all right."

But under his light words he had a sore heart. The girl was very dear to him. She was in trouble, and he could not help her. He contented himself with looking closely after her business interests—his friendship being of the rare kind which is willing to give much, looking not for a return—and with dropping in often to see her and the baby.

"I am going to call him Philip Varnum," she said to him on one of these occasions. "You must help me to make him worthy of the name." It was all she said, but he understood without anything more that she expected to rear the child without the help of his father.

Of Richard De Jarnette Margaret saw less and less as time went on. There was a feeling of constraint between them, natural enough, perhaps, under the circumstances, and for some reason growing. During those first weeks after her illness he had come often to the house,—had shown her unobtrusive kindnesses and done thoughtful things that added to her comfort, always in a self-effacing

way, evading thanks whenever possible. Sometimes she only heard of them through Mammy Cely. At rare intervals he even held the boy when the old nurse, who stood in awe of no man and least of all of this one who had been her foster child, had put it into his arms. He did it very awkwardly, 't is true, and in a fashion that gave Margaret nervous chills of fright lest he should drop him, or do some other dreadful thing, but manfully, as one who has a duty to perform and does it—with set teeth.

One day when Mammy Cely had taken the child away he asked, abruptly, "You find her useful to you?"

"Useful? Mammy Cely!" she said, "Oh, I think I could not live without her. I know so little about children." Then, in sudden alarm she faltered, "Were you thinking of taking her? I—I had almost forgotten you sent her to me." She looked so distressed that he hastened to assure her that the woman should stay as long as she was needed. He could get somebody else for Elmhurst.

She felt so profoundly grateful that she sung the praises of the colored woman—how she could trust her as she could not trust herself, because Mammy Cely knew so much more, and how she was sure she loved baby Philip as if he were her own, these, and other words of confidence which afterwards, strangely enough, recoiled on her head.

To all of which he had listened, bowing gravely, and looking at her with that close attention which always made her forget what it was that she had meant to say. Somehow he had a deadening effect upon her speech. She could not help feeling deep down in her heart, that he believed her responsible for his brother's defection. It was natural enough that he should try to excuse him; he had always done that, Mammy Cely said, even when he

was a boy, and had often taken the punishment that belonged to Victor rather than tell. He had been very, very fond of Victor, she said.

Yes, it was natural enough, Margaret thought, but still it did not conduce to conversation, and she was glad that day when he went away. Then she had gone to the nursery, another person, and taken little Philip and clucked to him, and touched his cheeks to make him smile and told him what she thought of his Uncle Richard—how cold he was, how silent, how he scared her, how he palsied her tongue or else made her say things she did not mean to say, how—greatest indignity of all—he had even looked askance at *him*, her "pe'cious lamb," and almost turned him upside down! but how he had left them Mammy Cely, and so they would forgive him, if only he would never come again.

And Baby Philip smiled a smile cherubic and murmured "Goo-o! ah-goo-o! for the first time, and Margaret almost smothered him with kisses, and was sure that never did mother have a comforter so sweet, a confidant so safe and yet so sympathetic.

Where does a baby get its balm? In that Gilead whence it came? From the skilful physician who knows all needs and uses tiniest instruments sometimes to reach hidden wounds? Who knows? At any rate into Margaret's sore heart was coming day by day the healing that proceeds only from time and the touch of little hands. More and more, by her own volition, her world was coming to be bounded by the walls of her baby's room. Here at least she was safe from the thrusts of meddlesome gossip and the pin pricks of Gossip's handmaid—Curiosity. Here she could live the simple satisfying life that "maketh rich," and "addeth no sorrow" that she was not willing to bear.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW RÔLE FOR RICHARD

IN all these months Margaret had not once heard from her husband. Rumors had come to her that he had not gone alone, but even this she could not verify, for she had ended the subject peremptorily with the informant who brought the story,—but the thorn implanted that day rankled. Her judgment and her knowledge of him told her it was true.

The fiction of her husband's call abroad on urgent business served its purpose as a nominal explanation, but it deceived nobody. Every one knew that Victor De Jarnette had no large business interests in Europe, or anywhere else, and that he was not the man to make any great sacrifice for them if he had had, being a man of pleasure more than of affairs. The knowing raised their brows and smiled. The sympathetic said, "Poor Margaret!"

She asked Richard De Jarnette only once if he had ever heard. No, he said, he had not. He had written and would let her know when the answer came. He did not tell her that his letter had been a bitter arraignment of Victor for his want of manliness in deserting his wife as he had done, and a stern demand that he should, for the sake of the De Jarnette name, if for no better reason, return or give some adequate explanation of his conduct —there could be no excuse. He had not spared him.

Failing to hear from this, he wrote again, this time adding the virile argument that in case of Victor's failure to explain his conduct, he should at once revise his will and name his (Victor's) apparently forgotten child as his heir, instead of himself. He felt that he had an elder brother's prerogative to counsel, and also the right of an outraged De Jarnette to protest against the dishonoring of his name. As child and man, Richard De Jarnette had been slow to wrath, but, once roused, there was a bull-dog tenacity about him that was hard to shake off. Perhaps that last clause was the most powerful argument he used. The younger De Jarnette had a great abundance of money of his own, but Richard had more, and Victor had always expected to inherit it. Moreover, he knew that his brother never made an idle threat. So he wrote.

When this answer to his peremptory letter was read by Richard De Jarnette, it put a somewhat different face upon the matter. He had been forced to this, Victor said, by Margaret's action. It was virtually she that had deserted him. She had laid upon him such restrictions as no man would for a moment submit to. She had been unreasonable, exacting, and jealous to a degree that was intolerable. "If you only knew all, you would retract your harsh words," Victor wrote. "I have always found you just, and certainly now that the greatest trouble of my life has overtaken me, I cannot believe that I will find you lacking in either sympathy or understanding," and thus and thus and thus. Victor was always a ready letter writer.

Richard De Jarnette read this letter very thoroughly. And as he read, a wave of pity swept over him for the misguided boy—he was little more than a boy—always impulsive, passionate, and full-blooded, but to the brother who was his judge to-day always warm-hearted and affec-

tionate. The letter had its effect. The world had judged Victor harshly, Richard thought, he with the rest, he more than all the rest perhaps. It might be, as he said, that had they known— But then the damning fact remained that he had deserted her, his young wife, in her time of need. No! Nothing could palliate that—nothing!

He took up the letter at that, and read further. Margaret had virtually driven him forth, Victor went on, and Richard remembered that the house was hers, built by money her father had left in trust for this very purpose. He had warned Victor that trouble would come from that some day. Women could not be trusted to refrain from taunting their husbands with "mine" and "thine," when the test came, he said, contemptuously. They were all alike. And where was the man that would stand humiliation like that? Certainly his name was not De Jarnette. This doubtless lay at the root of the matter, and was perhaps the reason that Margaret was so reticent about the cause of the trouble.

Perhaps—oh, curse the thing! It was n't a matter for him to meddle with—of course not. But it needed somebody—and whom else did they have? It ended in his reaching the deliberate and most unwelcome conclusion, after much struggle with himself, that it was his duty to go to his sister-in-law's house and enter upon the delicate and perilous office of peacemaker. Which he did.

Margaret met him distantly. They froze each other.

He had heard from Victor, he told her bluntly, feeling his poverty of phrases suited to womankind.

Her lips straightened. She held out her hand. Could she see the letter?

He reflected a moment. The letter as he thought of it did not seem particularly pacific, viewed from the stand-

point of a deserted wife, so he answered no. Then he began awkwardly and without preliminaries to explain. He had come to see if things could not be arranged between them—patched up for a while with the hope that time would bring them right. They were both young, and doubtless both had been somewhat in fault.

She interrupted him here to ask pointedly, "Has your brother told you anything about the point at issue?"

He was forced to answer that he had not.

"Then you are not competent to arbitrate," she said, quietly, and the subject was not easy to re-open after that. He went away baffled in his endeavors, berating himself for a blundering fool, but strengthened in the belief that the blame was not all on one side. The girl was ice.

As he thought it over that night, one thing came back to him again and again. She had said, "This is a thing that must be settled without a go-between, and *some day it will be.*" What did she mean by that? How would it be settled? She had looked uncompromising as she said it. What did she intend to do—get a divorce? Of course she could get it—on the palpable ground of desertion. He could see a difference in her attitude toward Victor as the months went by. At first there had been a reserve, a suspension of judgment, then apathy, and of late growing resentment. He had correctly interpreted her states of mind, though he did not appreciate the cause. As the months went by and Victor did not come, did not write, did not once even ask about his child, her heart hardened against him. This ignoring of Philip seemed worse to her almost than his treatment of herself. How could he stay away from his child? How could he be false to a helpless little thing like this that he had brought into the world? How could he— Then she would

snatch little Philip up in a passion of tenderness and cry in her heart, "I will be father and mother both to you, my baby, my poor little forsaken baby!"

As the months went by the chances seemed slighter that this thing would ever be "patched up," as Richard De Jarnette had said. She asked Judge Kirtley one day if a man had any claim upon a child he had deserted. Yes, he told her without comment, unless the mother was divorced from him. She closed her lips suddenly and said no more. She had read in the paper one day about a man's taking his child away from its mother, who had left him. The woman was a Catholic and could not have recourse to divorce to protect herself. Margaret thought a good deal about this incident. She had always been opposed to divorce.

Richard De Jarnette came to her again one day. He had had another letter from Victor,—a very touching one it had seemed to him as he read it. With Margaret's cold eyes upon him it seemed less so.

Victor was anxious for a reconciliation—he told her—and she bowed.

He was tired of his expatriation and longed for home—She smiled.

—and for a sight of his child.

"He is long remembering his child," she said.

Richard De Jarnette bit his lip, cursing himself for having come on this errand. But he had come at Victor's earnest request, and he would not abandon the case.

"I recognize the justice of what you imply," he returned. "I can hardly ask for him any leniency on your part, but, after all, the child is Victor's as well as yours, and is his heir. It is but natural that he should wish to see him. For Philip's sake I trust that in some way your differences may be arranged."

"I may as well tell you that they will never be," she said. "As long as there was a shadow of a hope that I had misjudged him I held my peace. Not even to you would I say aught against him. Now that my faith in him is dead I tell you plainly I shall never be Victor De Jarnette's wife again. You asked me once what we quarreled about. I will tell you now, for this is the last conversation we will have on the subject. He was untrue to me." Her eyes blazed. "The night we quarreled I had found it out and I told him he must choose between us. He chose the woman who was not his wife. So far as I am concerned that choice is irrevocable. . . . This was enough. Surely this *was* enough. But it was not all, as you know. By his cruel desertion of me and his unborn child he made me a target for the arrows of gossip and slander. Do you ask me to forget all this?"

"Do you mean that you intend to secure a divorce?" he asked her plainly.

"No. I shall make no effort to secure a divorce. People get divorces because they want to marry again. I have had enough of marriage."

"And if he should want one?"

"I shall not oppose it. All that I want now is to live out my own life, what is left of it, in my own way, with my child."

He sat a moment in thought. Then he felt constrained to say,

"I trust there may never be any trouble about the child. Victor is reckless and determined. If he should take it into his head to lay claim to it, or try to take it from you—"

"If Victor De Jarnette should lay a finger of his hand upon the child he deserted," she said at white heat, "I should kill him."

He knew, of course, that this was mere passionate talk. She was justified in having strong feeling. He thought no more about it. But that night in going over the interview, what she had said that other time came back to him. "It is a thing that must be settled without a go-between," she had said. "And some day it will be."

What did she mean by that? A mere separation settled nothing. He feared that Victor might give her trouble about the child.

CHAPTER IX

THE REAPING OF THE CROP

"OH, Mammy Cely, look! *look!* he is standing alone!" Margaret was sitting on the floor, her lips parted in rapturous delight at the temerity of her infant son, who was rather shakily making his little experiment with the center of gravity. Unfortunately for its success, he became aware at the critical moment of the sensation he was creating, tottered, and sank in a heap, a victim—like many another who essays the trial of his powers—to self-consciousness.

To partial mother eyes, however, it had been a triumph new in the annals of the world, and Margaret caught him up, smothering him with kisses, and pouring into his ears the most extravagant encomiums. Ah! if only we—the children of a larger growth—could have our feeble efforts to stand upon our feet; to make some progress, however slight, along the way, to utter, though imperfectly, the thoughts that cry for speech; if we—in all this—could have a tithe of the wealth of sympathy and stimulating praise that mothers give, what might we not become?

Mammy Cely looked on with equal pride. "He certainly is mighty ser*vi*grous on his laigs," she remarked with pride. "He 's gwineter be walkin' befo' long, that chile is! He 's like his Uncle Richard. He gwineter git his strengt early."

Margaret made no reply to this. The truth was, she got rather tired of hearing about Philip's Uncle Richard.

To her the weeks were becoming mere pegs on which to hang some new phase of the child's development. There was such an astonishing succession of "first things,"—yesterday the first tooth—a pearl such as nobody had ever seen before; to-day the wonderful feat of standing alone; to-morrow the blissful anticipation of the first step; the next day perhaps the first word,—and then, oh, what a world of companionship that would let her into! Life was closing up behind her, but opening in front.

"Now get him ready, Mammy Cely, for his ride. I want him to be out all he can this fine weather. A little later, you know—well, what is it?" she interrupted herself to ask of the man who now stood at the door. He had a scared look.

"Mr. De Jarnette is down stairs, Miss."

"Mr. De Jarnette? What in the world has he come for at this time of day?" wondered Margaret. "Tell him I will be down at once."

"It a-ain't Mr. R-r-richard De Jarnette, Miss," said the man, stammering in his excitement, "it 's Mr. Victor."

Victor! and announced like a stranger in his own home! She hardly knew the sound of her own voice as she answered, "Tell him I will be down at once."

At the door of the parlor she stopped. Her heart was beating so tumultuously it seemed to her that she would suffocate. She threw her head back as one who struggles for breath. Then she went in, closing the door behind her.

What passed in that interview nobody ever knew. The air was rife the next day with what it might have been; but the only thing ever reported was a fragment overheard by the mulatto who answered the bell, and who at that particular time was alert to do his duty. He related

to Richard De Jarnette the next day that as Mr. Victor opened the door to leave the parlor he heard him say. "Whatever you do, you may as well understand now that I shall *never* relinquish my claim to—" here the man said he missed something because it was spoken in a lower tone, but he was sure it must have been something about money, for he distinctly heard him use the word *claim.*

From that interview Margaret went to her room, and later from the house, with a face so white and haggard that as Mammy Cely related to Richard De Jarnette, who called, enquiring for Victor, a half hour after she was gone, she was actually afraid of what she might do to herself.

"She seemed sorter desprit, Marse Richard," she concluded, with the freedom of an old family servant, "and sorter wild-like. No, sir, I did n't know what she was goin' to do. *I don't know now!* . . . When she come up stairs she tuk that chile—we had done come back fum the Circle, 'cause Mr. Victor was here some right smart while—she tuk it, she did, and set down and helt it so tight the little thing cried. *Yaas,* sir, it did! And look lak she did n' even know it was frettin'. She jes' set there, holdin' it clost, and weavin' back and fo'th, back and fo'th, tell I got right fidgity. After a while she got up and give him to me, and say she was goin' down to see Jedge Kirtley. And she says, 'Mammy Cely,' she says, 'don't you let anybody even *see* Philip while I am gone. Don't you let him out of yo' sight,' she says. Look lak she was takin' somethin' mighty hard."

"She was naturally excited over Mr. De Jarnette's return," said Richard. But he left the house abruptly and called a passing cab to take him to his office. He was more disturbed at what he had heard than he would admit to Mammy Cely.

Victor had had a long talk with him before going to Margaret. In fact, he had gone directly to Richard upon reaching the city the night before, a fact that had appealed insensibly to Richard's heart. He had not seen him since, and feeling vaguely uneasy, he had at last gone to the Massachusetts Avenue house, hoping to find him there and hoping also that by that time things might have been satisfactorily arranged. Mammy Cely's account of Margaret's condition made him distinctly apprehensive. It did not look as if a reconciliation had taken place, to say the least. He must find out first of all where Victor was.

The office of De Jarnette and De Jarnette, Loans and Mortgages, was in the third story of the Conococheague Building on F Street, one of the finest in Washington at that time. They consisted of a large corner room, a smaller room at the side of this communicating with it, which was Victor's private office, and a still smaller one beyond this which he had had fitted up as a lavatory. All three opened upon the corridor,—Victor's room being nearest the stairway, which was alongside of the elevators. These offices were furnished in the most luxurious fashion and after Victor De Jarnette's faultless taste. The workroom of the firm was Richard's private office across the hall. In Victor's absence his rooms had been unused and untouched except by the man who did the cleaning.

Richard De Jarnette had returned to the building with the intention of going directly to Victor's room, but when he opened his own door a letter left by the postman attracted his attention and he waited to read it. In the midst of the reading he was startled by the sound of a pistol. He threw the letter down and started for the hall. It had seemed to come from Victor's room. He rushed across to his door. It was locked. In a moment he had made his way through the front office into the back room.

An appalling sight met his eyes. Victor lay on the floor near his desk, the blood trickling over the carpet from a hidden wound. And over him, with a revolver in her hand—the one he had seen on her desk—stood Margaret.

As Richard's face appeared in the doorway she turned a ghastly, terror-stricken face upon him.

"What is it? Who did it?" she gasped. "I—I picked this up."

"Put it down," he said sternly, and pushed past her. In the hall hurrying steps were heard, and a confusion of voices. People were trying the door.

Richard De Jarnette knelt beside a dying man, but there was a flash of recognition in the dimming eyes.

"Victor! in God's name, what is this?"

The wounded man's lips moved. His head was on his brother's arm and Richard's ear was close enough to catch the gasping whisper:

"She 's killed me, Dick."

"What does he say?" cried Margaret. The words had been too faint to reach her, but she saw a look of horror come into Richard De Jarnette's face. "Who did it? How did it happen?"

The room was filling with men. Dr. Semple, whose office was across the hall, was examining the wound.

In every man there is a divine spark of manliness. It is not always apparent. Sometimes it would seem to have burned itself out with the fierce fires of passion,—sometimes to have been quenched by the slow drippings that come from the fount called selfishness,—oftener, perhaps, it is smothered under a sodden blanket of sensuality and low desires,—but it is a spark of the divine fire, and when the right wind strikes it it leaps into flame.

At the sound of Margaret's voice Victor De Jarnette struggled to rise.

"Raise me up," he panted. "There is something—I—must say."

"Say it quickly," said the doctor, holding a handkerchief to stanch the blood. "There is no time to lose." To Richard and the men back of them he added, impressively, "This is a dying statement." And they gave close heed.

His head supported by Richard's arm, Victor gathered his strength for one supreme effort, and said so distinctly that all in the room heard it,

"It was accidental. I did it myself. I was—cleaning—my revolver." Men's eyes sought his desk where lay a handkerchief which had evidently been used for the purpose. "It—went off—in—my hand."

He sank back on a pillow taken hastily from the couch. It was one that Margaret had made for him before they were married—in the Harvard colors. It looked ghastly put to such a use.

"Can't you do something?" asked Richard De Jarnette hoarsely of the doctor.

"No, Richard," he said gently, "he is almost gone."

The dying man opened his eyes.

"Dick,—" his voice was very faint.

"Yes, Victor."

"—take care of m—"

Then, as if some sudden thought or recollection had come to him, he struggled again to rise, whispering wildly,

"The will! . . . Richard! the will! Don't let—"

His head dropped back against the crimson letters. That which it was in his heart to say would be forever unsaid.

CHAPTER X

"DUST TO DUST"

AT the coroner's inquest Margaret was the first one questioned.

When Victor De Jarnette breathed his last, Dr. Semple had taken her by the hand and led her, apparently almost stupefied, into Richard's room, there to await the summons to appear before the coroner, who was immediately notified of the death. When she came in she was entirely collected, though very pale. Her appearance indicated more horror at what had occurred than grief, which was but natural under the circumstances, as more than one man thought, recalling the past year.

When questioned, she stated that her husband had been with her through the afternoon, that he had left her home about four o'clock, and that she had come down to the office an hour or so later. She had gone directly to the door of the main office, and just before reaching it had heard the pistol shot. She ran through the front office into Mr. De Jarnette's private room, feeling sure that the sound had come from there. She had found him on the floor, and near him a revolver which she recognized as one that he had had in his possession for several years.

Here, suddenly recalling Mr. De Jarnette's peremptory command to her to put the pistol down, she hesitated, and looked at him. His face was averted.

She went on, saying nothing about having had the

pistol in her hand, nor about its being one of a pair that her husband owned, though this fact came to her suddenly. She had not had time to question him, she said, nor even to go to him before Mr. De Jarnette came in.

Had she heard any sound at the other door?

No, she had heard nothing, or rather she had been so horror-stricken to come upon her husband in this condition that she had not noticed anything.

Richard De Jarnette stated that he had heard the shot while he was in his own room across the hall and had hurried at once to the outside door of his brother's room. Finding it locked he had run around through the main office and found things just as Mrs. De Jarnette had testified. The door was locked, but it was a night latch, he got up to show. One might have gone out that way.

"Without encountering you?" the coroner asked. And Mr. De Jarnette, hesitating, and weighing his words, thought it hardly probable, though possible.

Margaret interrupted timidly here to say that since he spoke of the door she recollected hearing something just as she came in that sounded like the closing of a door. Mr. De Jarnette turned toward her, and with his hard eyes upon her, Margaret faltered that perhaps it was the outer door of the lavatory. Investigation proved that that door was bolted on the inside.

"I cannot see the pertinence of this line of inquiry," said Mr. De Jarnette, at length, almost roughly, "in the face of his dying statement that it was accidental." And his eyes as if by chance turned upon his sister-in-law.

The elevator boy was questioned as to whether any suspicious person had gone down about that time. He could not remember. It seemed to him, upon further thought, that a fat old lady had got on going down at the time of the pistol shot, but so many people went up and down all

the time he could n't be sure that it was not on the floor below.

Dr. Semple was examined as to the wound.

"I have made no careful examination," he said slowly, "beyond assuring myself that nothing could be done for him, and later that life was extinct. I have not thought it necessary. A dozen men are here who heard him say it was accidental, and from a weapon in his own hand." He picked up the cloth used in cleaning the revolver. "This seems to substantiate his statement as to how he happened to have the pistol." Several men were examined as to the ante-mortem statement.

The coroner's report was, "Accidental killing from a weapon in the hand of the deceased." Since it had been clearly shown to be accidental, no jury was impaneled.

It was Margaret's wish that Victor should be buried from his own home. When Judge Kirtley communicated this wish to Richard De Jarnette, he was surprised to find him averse to the arrangement. He preferred that he should be buried from *his* home, he said briefly. They were separated, and there was no use keeping up a pretence that they were not.

The Judge remonstrated that nobody knew what had passed between them that afternoon, not even Mr. De Jarnette, nor how it would have gone in the future had Victor lived. Margaret's wish to have him buried from his own home would seem to indicate that there had been a reconciliation. At any rate, it would put a different face on the matter to the world, and make it easier for her afterwards.

"Yes," Richard agreed, grimly, "it might make things easier for her." And he consented.

The burial service was brief and wholly impersonal. The burial was private.

Margaret went to the carriage on the arm of her brother-in-law by the arrangement of the undertaker. He had not been near her since the day they separated at the close of the coroner's inquest. Victor De Jarnette's body had lain in his brother's house two days and nights and had then been taken to the house on Massachusetts Avenue the morning of the burial. This was the most that Mr. De Jarnette would consent to. Whatever was thought about the grief of the wife, at this untimely death, there was no doubt as to that of the brother. Richard De Jarnette had aged years in these few days.

As the carriage door was closed upon Margaret alone, Judge Kirtley stepped up to the undertaker.

"Does not Mr. De Jarnette ride with Mrs. De Jarnette?" he asked in a low tone.

"No, sir, he preferred to ride in the second carriage alone. The third is reserved for you, sir."

"I will trouble you to open that door," said the Judge, rather stiffly, indicating the first carriage. "You may use your third carriage for some one else or dismiss it. I shall ride with Mrs. De Jarnette."

In a green bank at Oak Hill he was laid—Oak Hill, that beautiful silent suburb which, for a century of the capital's life—the shifting, heaving, kaleidoscopic life in which men come and go, and wax and wane, and pass into obscurity in ceaseless flow—has steadily gained in population and never lost. A passionate, turbulent soul was Victor De Jarnette, not wholly bad certainly; capable of much that was generous; productive of little that was worth perpetuating; not lacking in good impulses, but casting them oftener than otherwise in a mould of wax, which melted at the first hot blast of passion,—a mixture, like most of us perhaps, of good and evil, black and white. But alas!

"The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

That night Margaret De Jarnette sat long before the grate fire of the lonely house to which she had come a bride,—looking into the darkening coals and seeing nothing,—looking into the embers of a dead fire within, and finding much that had burned out. She lived relentlessly over the past two years,—putting to herself searching questions and exacting an answer to every one; going down into black depths of whose existence she once had not dreamed and coming up with staring, frightened eyes from which the scales of innocence had dropped.

Then she drew a long, shuddering breath.

"That book is closed," she whispered, "never to be opened again, *thank God!* . . . My girlhood is put away with it. I am old—old!"—she threw herself on her knees beside her sleeping child— "But oh, my baby! my little one! my blessed one! I have you! I have you!"

"SEMPLE," Richard De Jarnette said abruptly as he and his friend sat together that night—a long silence had fallen between them—"could a wound like that be self-inflicted? In God's name, tell me the truth!"

It was the question Dr. Semple had been dreading for three days. He had thought of several ways to evade it. When it came, there was something in the haggard face of the man before him that would not be denied.

"No," he said, simply. "It would be a physical impossibility."

CHAPTER XI

THE WILL

IT was two weeks or more after the burial of Victor De Jarnette before his will was read. Mr. Jarvis, the attorney in whose charge it had been left, had been absent from the city at the time of the unfortunate affair, and the hearing of the will had of necessity been postponed until his return. This was a matter of very little concern to Margaret. It seemed to her rather a useless formality anyway, this coming together to hear the provisions of a legal instrument that could have but one outcome. The money would go to Philip, of course. Judge Kirtley had talked to her about her "dower rights," and a "child's part," and several other things that she did not in the least understand, but she only shook her head. She had a great abundance of money, she told him, for her own needs and Philip's, too, for that matter, and she had determined to turn over to her child at once whatever legally came to her. She had a shuddering feeling that she did not want to use Victor's money. Let it all go to Philip. In fact, Margaret had always been so far removed from any care in regard to money except the spending of it that her ideas on the subject were very vague and impractical. She had always had all the money she wanted or could possibly use, and what would anybody want with more than that? Avarice is the vice of age rather than of youth, and Margaret certainly was not avaricious.

She had spent this fortnight in adjusting herself to new

conditions. When the first horror of it all passed she became aware that a great load was lifted from her heart. There was nothing to do; there was no choice pressing upon her; everything was settled, and that by no act of hers; there was no danger now of trouble about Philip, and the sharp relief she experienced at this thought made her aware of what a steadily-growing fear that had begun to be. No, that was over now, thank God! and she caught up the child in a passion of relief.

There was something infinitely touching about the girl in these days when she stood looking at the wreck of her life. It was so different from what she had thought it would be—so different! She wondered vaguely if other people—most people—saw their ships go down like this.

The sea around her was filled with wreckage. There was nothing now but to gather up the scattered bits and with such courage as she could summon, piece out another life. A very quiet subdued one this would be, with Philip as its center. It would be colorless perhaps—she shivered slightly,—she was not quite twenty-one, and color had not lost its charm,—but it would, at least, be peaceful.

Then, as thought projected itself into the future, and she saw this opening bud grow to the perfect flower, it seemed to her that it would not only be peaceful, but satisfying. Now he was a rolicking boy, and she would see to it that he missed none of life's pleasures that had not a sting;—now he was a lad at school, she standing by his side, thinking his thoughts and leading him on to think hers—she would keep very, very close to him! her little Philip!—then a youth at college—*could* she let him go away for that?—and now a man fitted for useful life, and with his strong arm shielding her, his mother, who had shielded him, smoothing the pathway for her feet as she went down life's hill. Ah! through it all how she

would guard him, guide him, carry him by sheer force of mother-love across the slippery places that his feet would find. His father—and her thought of him, a motherless boy, grew tender—his father had missed this. Perhaps, if he had had it—well, she would make it up to Philip, his child, at any rate. She would try to keep him pure. This with a sudden sinking sense of her own helplessness. The first regret came to her that it was a son she had and not a daughter. A daughter she could keep with her while a son must of necessity go out into the world, and the world, she thought with a pang, was so full of peril, of temptation.

The more she pondered it the more her soul was girded for her work. To mould a life! This was what was left her. Well! was it not enough? To find her chief happiness not in living her own, but in fashioning another life. Then to something that spoke within her she made answer, "Yes, of course, it will be lonely, but—" A fragment of a fugitive poem she had once read came to her,

"Lonely? Well, and what of that?"

She could not recall the next two lines—such scraps are so elusive—but it did not matter. The trumpet call of the thing was in the last line:

"Work may be done in loneliness. Work on!"

She bowed her head over the crib on which lay her sleeping child. She took his soft dimpled hand between her palms.

"Yes, it is lonely, little Philip," she whispered brokenly, —"it will always be lonely, but—

'Work may be done in loneliness.'"

"I 'll begin again, dear, and map out another life and we will live it together, you and I. And we will make it just as sweet and full a life as we can—for 'I 'll have

you and you 'll have me.' We won't be gloomy or sad—we will not *let* ourselves be—nothing shall cast a shadow over this little life we are going to live—*nothing!* It is ours! We will make it the brightest and the best thing we can. We have a right to be happy and we will be! Nobody shall keep us from it, little Philip!"

It was in this mood of quiet exaltation that she went down stairs to the reading of the will a little later when the lawyer came.

She had not seen her brother-in-law since the funeral. To Judge Kirtley's unspeakable indignation Mr. De Jarnette had not even returned to the house with her. At this lack of civility, to say nothing of brotherly kindness, she was surprised and hurt, but she clothed herself in her impenetrable garment of silence regarding it, and made no comment.

Judge Kirtley had not been so reticent. To his wife he had said with some heat,

"He is the most incomprehensible man I ever saw. I know he is undemonstrative by nature, but up to this time he really has not been lacking in substantial kindness to Margaret. I judge so from what she tells me—particularly when Victor first went away and she most needed help. But since his death, when one would have expected him to stand by her, he has stood aloof. I can't understand it. He certainly is not an emotional man, nor an impulsive one. There is something back of this."

"Can she have offended him by anything she has said? And still she has been so very reticent—"

"No," said the Judge, "it is n't that, I am sure. I have sometimes wondered if it could be—" he was patting his foot thoughtfully and talking more to himself than to her,—"that he had some suspicion that Victor's death was by his own hand—intentionally, I mean—and held

Margaret responsible for it—as the result of their interview."

"And what that was we will never know," said his wife, with the tone of one airing a grievance.

"No, and never should," her husband responded, quickly. "She shows her sense there. I have wondered, I say, if he can hold such a thought as that against her. It is the only thing I can think of that would at all excuse his conduct."

"Did n't Victor make a dying statement that it was accidental?"

"Yes."

"A sworn statement?"

"No. But a dying declaration has almost as much weight."

"Then, of course, it was the truth! Would n't that be perjury or something like that to make a false statement at such a time?"

"Well, you see," the Judge responded, dryly, "Victor De Jarnette was going where he would be in no danger of being tried for perjury—even admitting that it would have been that—which it would n't." Then, feeling that he had been a little indiscreet in thus thinking aloud before the wife of his bosom, who did not enjoy quite all his confidence, he added, "I think you are right, my dear. It was a foolish thought in me."

"It certainly was," answered Mrs. Kirtley, pursuing the advantage of this concession to her superior wisdom, "foolish and wild. Of course it was an accident! Why, was n't the rag there that he had been cleaning the pistol with?"

"It was."

"Well!" triumphantly.

"You are right again. That settles it," said the Judge,

chuckling to himself. "You ought to have been a lawyer, my dear, or a detective."

"Oh, I can see a thing when it is self-evident," his wife said, modestly.

The three gentlemen, Mr. De Jarnette, Judge Kirtley, and Mr. Jarvis were in the library when Margaret entered it. The latter, being nearest the door, rose and extended his hand in grave courteous greeting. Mr. De Jarnette—the table between them—bowed; while Judge Kirtley took her affectionately by the hand and drew her to a chair beside him. She was clothed in black relieved by white at neck and wrists. There was something about her slight girlish form and youthful face that made the attorney with the legal document in his hand draw a quick deep breath and give an unnoticed movement of the head as if in protest.

"And are you well?" asked the Judge, patting her hand and smiling re-assuringly into her eyes. There is something very awe-inspiring to a novice in a visit from a lawyer with a legal document in his hand.

"Oh, yes, quite well, thank you."

Her hands were cold. He said, to give her time to recover herself, "And how is the boy?"

Her face lighted up as from a burst of sunshine. "Doing nicely, thank you. Growing every day in strength and accomplishments. Why, he actually travels around chairs faster than we want to travel after him."

"That 's right. He 'll lead you a merry chase when he finds out his powers."

"Yes, and he is finding them out very rapidly. He is going to be a real boy—so strong and active."

"He is great company for you," Judge Kirtley said, "and will be more as time goes on. I know how these little things creep into one's heart. You know I lost my

boy." It was forty years since then, but his eyes grew moist as he thought of the son who might have been his stay, and was but a tender memory.

Her hand closed over his. "It must be very hard to lose a child," she said, softly. "I—I think I could not bear that. They come so *close!*"

They were talking almost in an undertone. Richard De Jarnette had left the room to speak to his driver at the door. The lawyer, a kind-hearted man with children of his own, was fumbling over the papers in his bag, saying helplessly, "Oh, Lord! Lord!"

When Mr. De Jarnette returned, Margaret released her hand gently and sat upright. Then the reading began.

The will was dated May 3, 1889, two days after their marriage. Margaret remembered Victor's coming home that day and telling her that he had made it and had left everything to her,—remembered too how she had clung passionately to him in the superstitious fear of what a will might bring, and said that she did not want his money, she wanted him. Yes, the date was the same, and as the reading proceeded she saw, through all the tiresome verbiage, that it was just as he had said—all was left to his "beloved wife, Margaret." Richard De Jarnette was named as executor.

The lawyer paused as if this were the end, though he still held the paper—a little unsteadily—before him. It seemed to Judge Kirtley, watching from the depths of his leather-covered chair, that the paper shook.

Margaret's voice broke the stillness that followed the reading of the will.

"I do not know that this is the time or place to do this," she began with hesitation, "but—when this will was written there was no child. Now that there is, I wish to transfer this property to him. I have enough—"

"Margaret," the Judge interrupted, "the law takes care of that. Though there is no mention of a child, he would share with you."

"I want him to have it all," she said. "I—I could not keep this money for myself. I would not wish to use it."

She turned to look at Judge Kirtley, who was at her right, and as she did so met Richard De Jarnette's steady gaze. There was something so intent, so inexplicable in his eyes,—a look so like hate or scorn or distrust,—something at least that she had never seen there before,—that involuntarily she dropped her eyes. What had she said? What made him look like that? There was something in that look that froze her blood.

Judge Kirtley as her lawyer spoke authoritatively. "There is time enough to attend to all that later. These things should never be done with precipitation."

And Margaret, who had not yet recovered from that startling look into Richard De Jarnette's heart, and was moreover oppressed with the fear that she had done a thing Judge Kirtley disapproved, subsided into silence.

The voice of Mr. Jarvis was heard.

"I regret to say," he remarked slowly and with his eyes bent religiously on the paper, "that there is a codicil to this will, bearing date of April 30th of the following year. No one can deprecate more than I the painful duty that devolves upon me of reading it in this presence."

Judge Kirtley sat up in his easy chair, scenting danger. It was unusual for an attorney to apologize for a will. But Margaret was motionless. She was thinking of the date. It was the day Victor left her—two days before Philip was born.

Then the attorney read:

"To my beloved brother, Richard De Jarnette, who has

been to me a father, I give and bequeath the custody and tuition of my child until it shall be of full age, and I direct that such disposition shall be good and effectual against all and every person or persons claiming the custody and tuition of said child."

For a moment there was not a sound. It was Margaret, again, who broke the silence. She turned to Judge Kirtley, a look of bewilderment on her face, but no alarm.

" 'Custody,' " she repeated, simply. "What does it mean by 'custody'? Is it the care of the property?"

The Judge's face looked gray in its rigidity. He shook his head slightly and then motioned toward Mr. Jarvis.

"Mr. De Jarnette's attorney will explain," he said, briefly.

Margaret turned to the lawyer who still held the paper in his hand. "You see I am very ignorant of legal terms," she said, with a pitiful little attempt at apology,—"I have never had anything to do with the law—and I do not quite understand what 'custody' means here. Is it that Mr. De Jarnette is by this codicil appointed Philip's guardian—to take care of his property?"

The attorney did not look up from the papers he was fingering. Indeed, as she looked from one to another in her perplexity Margaret saw only averted faces. There was not one that was ready to look into her anxious, pleading eves.

"Mrs. De Jarnette," said the attorney, moistening his dry lips, "this means something more serious than that, or rather it would if Mr. De Jarnette were inclined to insist upon the letter of the law—which, of course, he will not do—" with a rather imploring glance in the direction of the gentleman referred to. Mr. De Jarnette sat unmoved and immovable, not showing by the change of a

muscle that he heard the appeal, and the lawyer went on. "Custody in this sense does not mean the guardianship of property, but of the person."

There was another silence. Then Margaret,—eyes staring, breath coming hard, hands clenched, and face white as death, spoke.

"Do you mean," she said slowly and in a voice that trembled with suppressed passion, "that my child has been willed away from me?—from me—his mother? That this man—or *any* man—can have the right by law to take him from me? . . . *My baby?* . . . Oh, no! you don't mean this! . . . I was mad to think of it. But you see—I am so inexperienced."

"But, Mrs. De Jarnette," returned the lawyer, feeling his task harder even than he had feared, "I am obliged to tell you—much as I regret to do so—that it is true. There is a most unfortunate law in this District—not to call it by a harsher name—which gives a father the right to will away his child even from its mother. That law your late husband unfortunately knew about, and in a moment of great anger, and, as he claimed, of great provocation, he used that knowledge as we have seen."

"To stab the woman he had sworn to cherish," muttered Judge Kirtley, under his breath. Then, reaching for the will, he asked, sternly, "Were all the requirements of the law complied with in regard to witnesses?"

"Yes, sir. I am sorry to say that nothing has been omitted that would give validity to the will—or rather to this codicil."

"Then I am constrained to say," blurted the Judge, "that it was a dastardly thing!"

"I think I should say, in justice to myself," said Mr. Jarvis, a little stiffly, "that I made every effort to dissuade Mr. De Jarnette from doing this thing. I urged

him to wait until the next day, knowing him to be an impulsive man, and feeling sure that he would wish afterwards to undo what he had done. But—he would not listen to me. I hoped that I could get him to change the will when he returned, and I can hardly doubt that he would have done so, had it not been for the unfortunate accident that ended his life."

Margaret had been listening breathlessly. As Mr. Jarvis stopped she turned to speak to Judge Kirtley and again encountered the steady gaze of Richard De Jarnette's black eyes. It seemed so strange, so unaccountable, for him to watch her so that before she could control it—if indeed control is ever possible—she felt a hot tide sweeping up from neck to brow. And the consciousness of this did not lessen the flow. Then it passed and left her paler than before. It was annoying but it did not stop her in what she had to say. A new thought had come to her while Mr. Jarvis was speaking.

"What is the date of that codicil?" she asked.

"April 30, 1890."

"I thought so," she said eagerly. "Well, don't you see how that date changes everything? Even if my—if Mr. De Jarnette had had the right by law to will away my child he could not have done it on April 30th, for Philip was not born till two days afterward! His birthday is May second!" She said it exultantly.

As by one impulse the two lawyers looked each into the face of the other and then away.

"Don't you see?" she cried desperately, not comprehending the look but knowing instinctively that something was wrong. "Don't you see the difference that makes? When that will was made this child was *mine!* —a part of my body!—my very breath giving him life! . . . Don't you see?—Oh, *can't* you see? . . . He

would n't have the right to make this will then—*not then!*"

Her voice was becoming strained and high-pitched in her excitement.

"Mrs. De Jarnette," began Mr. Jarvis, "the law—I should say—yes, the law—Judge, you can explain this to her better than I can."

She turned to Judge Kirtley. She was in extremity now.

"My child," he said, "the law, as it distinctly states, recognizes in this thing no difference between the living child and the infant *en ventre sa mere*. Your husband, according to the laws of the District of Columbia, had a right to will away your unborn child."

She stared at him incredulously. Then, as the meaning of his words sank into her quivering soul, she bent toward him with a look that had a challenge in it.

"And have you known this before?"

"Always."

"And you?" she demanded, turning to Mr. Jarvis.

"Yes," he admitted. "It is a part of our imperfect laws. The whole thing should have been revised long ago. It is a disgrace to the District."

"Then *why* does it remain upon your statute books?" she cried, furiously. "Is law only for the strong? Do we—the weak—the ones who need it most—do we find in it only something to mock us when we cry to it?"

Her timidity was all gone. She flung her questions at them tumultuously, as children stand and beat impotently upon a door that will not open to them. "I tell you it is a wicked law! a wicked, wicked law! and they do wickedly who let it stand! . . . *A mother have no right to her unborn child?* Shame! shame! upon the men who

frame such laws! They are not born of women but of beasts!"

"Margaret," Judge Kirtley said, sternly, "you must control yourself. This is no place for a discussion of our laws, however imperfect they are."

"I beg your pardon," she answered with a flush and a return to her usual manner. "In this insult to womanhood and motherhood I forgot myself. I shall not do so again. Only tell me that I need not fear—that my baby is safe with me!"

As she spoke she turned full upon Richard De Jarnette though she did not call his name.

He looked at her impassively.

"Mr. De Jarnette," said Mr. Jarvis, nervously, folding up his papers and placing them in his satchel, "I think you can do more to add to your sister-in-law's peace of mind than anybody else can. Will you not tell her plainly your intentions in the matter?"

"I will," said Richard De Jarnette, a sudden fire leaping to his eyes, which were upon Margaret. Then he turned to the attorney.

"I accept the trust my brother has bequeathed to me, and shall claim the child."

Saying which he rose, bowed slightly, and left the room.

CHAPTER XII

A LOSING FIGHT

IT was as if a thunderbolt had fallen from a clear sky. Margaret dropped back like one shot. Judge Kirtley and the attorney looked after the disappearing figure and then at each other.

Before they had time to recover from their astonishment Margaret started up in a quiver of excitement.

"Where has he gone? Is he after Philip?"

Before they could remonstrate she was out of the room and hurrying up the stairs.

"Had you any knowledge, sir, of the stand Mr. De Jarnette was going to take?" demanded Judge Kirtley, sternly.

"Not the slightest. It is as much of a surprise to me as to you."

"Did he know the nature of this will before coming here?"

"I think not. He certainly did not know it from me, and I have reason to think that he did not see his brother after it was made until the day he returned, which was the day of his death, I believe."

"It was."

"I was out of the city at the time and did not see Victor De Jarnette after this codicil was added, April thirtieth. I wish to God I had! I think perhaps I could have persuaded him then to alter it. He had had a good many

months in which to cool down. He was a hot-headed fellow, you know."

"You say you tried to argue him out of doing it in the first place?"

"I used every effort in my power, but he would listen to nothing. I never saw a man so carried away by passion."

"Well, by the Lord, sir!" said the Judge, bringing his fist down upon the table, "I believe I should have refused to draw up that will!"

The attorney flushed.

"I did so at first," he returned quietly, "but he insisted that if I would not do it he could get somebody that would—which, of course, I knew was true. I thought that when he had had time to think it over he would feel ashamed of it and want to change it, and I felt that if it were between us two I should be in a better position to try to bring this about than if it had gone entirely out of my hands."

"There is something in that," admitted the Judge.

"I had n't the least idea that he was going off. I wrote to him when I found out where he was, and urged him to make a new will over there, but he replied that he would attend to it when he got home. I really think he intended to do it, but you know how he was cut off."

"Yes, that 's it. We never have the warning we suppose we will have. We know that other people drop dead but we never expect to do it ourselves . . . I hope you are right, for it is rather hard for me to forgive Victor De Jarnette. Living he made her life wretched, and from the grave he has reached up to strike her. He could not have given a crueler blow than this. And the other one,—I tell you, Jarvis, that man is going to give us trouble. Were n't you amazed at the stand he took?"

"Astounded. I cannot fathom his motive."

"Nor I," returned the Judge, helplessly. "But as sure as you are a living man he means business. I would n't tell Margaret so, but I don't believe there will be any back-down from this. We 'll have to fight it out in the courts. . . . Poor child! she has had trouble enough to break the spirit of an ordinary woman."

"Do you know the De Jarnettes intimately?" asked Mr. Jarvis. "I was wondering what would be the best way to reach him."

"I know them well," said the Judge, energetically. "Better than I wish I did. I would have more hope of a peaceable settlement of this thing if I knew less. There is a cruel streak in the De Jarnettes. You have seen it in Victor and I have seen it in his father. And it was in his grandfather before him. They never forgive and they never forget an injury to any of the blood. I believe that is why Richard De Jarnette had taken this stand. I think he must consider her in some way responsible for his brother's going wrong. You know there are men who always charge everything to a woman. I can't see anything else that would account for his change of front."

"Judge," the attorney said hurriedly—he was expecting Margaret at any moment—"what are you going to do? Of course you will represent Mrs. De Jarnette. You will fight?"

"Fight!" Judge Kirtley drew his somewhat stooping figure up to its full measure. "Yes, sir, we will fight—to the death! I am an old war horse to be going into battle, but I hope there is one fight left in me! We 'll see, anyway."

"I should not like to be your opponent, sir,—and I 'll tell you this: *I shall not be.*"

"The laws of the District are against us," said Judge Kirtley, reflectively. "That 's a damnable law, Jarvis!"

"The whole thing is rotten," answered the attorney. "The District of Columbia has laws on her statute books that would make her a laughing stock for civilized communities if they were generally known. This is one of the most infamous, but there are others just as unreasonable. The whole thing ought to be plowed up and weeded out."

"God speed the day! I suppose that child will hold her baby in her arms all night, fearing at every sound that Richard De Jarnette is coming to drag him away from her. And I don't feel sure that he would n't if he got a chance. The trouble about these silent fellows is that you never know what they are going to do next. What will be his next move do you suppose?"

"Have the will probated, I suppose, and have himself confirmed as guardian and executor."

"And then?"

"Oh! the Lord knows, Judge! I don't. What could a man do with a child of that age? It is spite work. Nothing short of it." He put his papers carefully away. "Do you think Mrs. De Jarnette is coming down? I shall have to be going. Set me right with her about this matter, will you? I regret exceedingly to have had any part in it."

WHEN he was gone Judge Kirtley sent up for Margaret. She came down with Philip in her arms.

"I would not come," she said, "while that man was here. How could he have done such a thing? . . . And oh, Judge Kirtley, they can't take him from me, can they? Is there such a cruel law as that?"

It seemed crueler to him to-day than ever before, as he looked at the slight creature clinging to her child.

"There really is such a law. I have never seen it put to the test, but I feel sure it would not be enforced in such a case as this where there is nothing against your character, and the child is so young."

"But when he grows older," she said, quickly, "could he take him then?"

"That would have to be tested in the courts, Margaret. You may feel sure of my doing all that can be done."

"Oh, I do, I do. But it is so dreadful that it needs to be done. Why should he want Philip? I—I can't understand it. It frightens me. And why does he look at me as he does? It—it makes me feel as if I have done something."

"That is doubtless all imagination, but—how long have you noticed this?" the Judge inquired, carelessly.

"Ever since the day of the funeral. And even that day when we were together at the inquest. Judge Kirtley . . . would he dare to harm Philip if he could get hold of him?"

"Margaret, this is foolish, child. The only thing he could do would be to get possession of the child as testamentary guardian by due process of law, and that is always long."

"And if he got him and I could only get him back by due process of law—would that be long too?"

"Yes, that might be longer still, for being his legal guardian he would have the law presumably on his side. But, my dear, we won't cross that bridge to-day. He has n't got him yet. I don't believe there is a court on earth—certainly not in this District—that would take your child from you. Cheer up. We 'll fight it out if worst comes to worst."

She did not smile. "Do you think it is because he wants the money?"

"I have thought of that, of course. It generally is because of money that most of the deviltry is done. But I had never thought he was that kind of man."

"Oh, I hope it is! That would make it all so simple. Can't you find out if it is and tell him to take it, all of it —I don't want the money—only he must give up all claim to Philip."

"Nonsense, Margaret," said the Judge, testily, "I shall do nothing of the kind. You have no right to relinquish this money—either your own or Philip's. It is willed to you and it ought to stand."

"Yes, but the same will that gives me the money gives him Philip! . . . Oh, why did Victor do this wicked thing?"

As he went away Judge Kirtley said, "I shall go to Mr. De Jarnette and see what I can do toward settling it out of court. I think it will turn out all right. I have great faith that he can be brought to see it in the right light. And if he can't and it has to go into the courts—" Margaret looked hopelessly at him—the case seemed lost already, so powerful and fearful a thing is the law to the inexperienced—"you must remember always that in any proceedings concerning the custody of children, even in the absence of any express statute, the court is obliged to consider the welfare of the child as paramount to every other consideration, and it has the power even to take a child away from its guardian if that seems best for the child."

"But in this case it seems that there is an express statute, or law, or whatever it is," said Margaret, who had been listening with all the powers of a mind unused to legal terms and technicalities, "and that it is against the mother."

"That does not make it certain that the courts would sustain the will. The court is always apt to favor the claim of the mother unless it can be proved that she is an improper person to have charge of it. So cheer up, my child."

She was standing before him with the boy, who laughed and crowed unheeded, in her arms.

"But if he should come when you are gone and try to take him," she said, her eyes big with fright. "What could I do?"

"Margaret, he will not come. You need not fear it in the least. Richard De Jarnette would not go against the law to secure your child—even if he cannot be persuaded to give him up."

"How can I tell what is law?" she cried passionately. "If anybody had told me yesterday that the law gave a man a right to will away my child before it was born, I should have said he was mad! And when this other man comes and demands that child—as he will, I know he will!—how am I to know that the law does not give him the power to take him?"

"Because I am telling you now that it does not. You can trust me if you can't the law. That is n't the danger to be feared."

"What is?" she asked, quickly.

"Just what I was telling you, that after due process of law the court might decide in favor of his claim—if he should press it—and I don't believe he will."

"He will!" she said, hopelessly. "I know he will. You don't know how vindictively he looked at me."

It was useless to argue against such logic as this, and he went away.

When he was gone Margaret had the great door locked and bolted and gave orders that no one should be admitted. That night she slept fitfully, Philip in her arms.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WOLF BLOOD

IT was not until the next day that Judge Kirtley went to see Mr. De Jarnette.

"I will give him an opportunity to sleep over it," he told his wife. "A man's sober second thought is always in the morning."

But Richard De Jarnette's sleep had not been long enough nor sound enough to change his mind.

"The stubbornness of the man is incredible," the Judge reported when he got home. "He 's going to make us trouble—I can see that. He makes no accusation against Margaret. He does n't try in the least to defame her character, but he says his brother undoubtedly had sufficient reasons for making such a will and that he shall carry out his wishes."

"I suppose the small matter of Margaret's having borne the child is no reason why he should consult *her* wishes," said Mrs. Kirtley, indignantly.

"Apparently not. He simply ignores her."

"What could he do with a baby? He can't take care of it! I can't see why he wants it."

"It is n't that he wants it. This is not affection. But for some reason he is determined that Margaret shall not have it."

"It is a dog-in-the-manger spirit!"

"No," the Judge said, thoughtfully, "it is n't that." From long habit his judicial mind was weighing evidence on both sides. "I am convinced that he has some

reason for this, but so far I have n't been able to get at it. I asked him plainly if he had anything against Margaret. He said he had no accusations to make. And indeed I don't see that he could make any. If ever in a case like this a woman has been absolutely blameless, that woman is Margaret."

"What does he propose to do with the child?"

"I asked him that. He says he shall leave him in charge of the old woman who has taken care of him all his life, but he intends to take them to his home. He says she is perfectly competent and trustworthy—"

"Well, that is true," acknowledged Mrs. Kirtley. "I never saw a more faithful nurse."

"So he says. He claims that Margaret has herself told him repeatedly that the old woman knows better what to do with the child than she does."

"As if that proved anything! Every young mother has to learn. The man is a brute! Will he take Philip at once?"

"Oh, no! A will must always be admitted to probate before anybody can have any rights under it. And when it is we will be there to contest it."

"Have you talked with Margaret?"

"No. She is to come to the office this afternoon."

When he laid the case before her there Margaret listened in silence. Her excitement of the day before was gone. In fact Judge Kirtley would have been glad to see her more moved than she was. Her calmness seemed almost like despair.

"I knew he would not do it," she said. "He means us harm."

"Well, just for the present, my dear, I seem to have been unsuccessful, but I have by no means given up hope of its being compromised."

"What reason does he give for persisting in taking Philip from me?"

"None at all. He simply falls back on the will and says he wants to carry out his brother's wishes."

"There *is* some reason," she said positively. "He hates me. For what cause I cannot tell. I have felt it since the day Victor died. He has avoided me ever since. I am *afraid of him.* And yet I feel powerless before a fear that cannot even be defined. Why should he hate me?"

"I think that is imagination. Are you willing to talk with him?"

"Why, certainly."

"Very well then, I shall arrange for you to see him to-morrow—in his private office."

Then they fell to talking about the will and Margaret said, hesitatingly, "Judge Kirtley, are you sure it would n't make any difference—Philip's not being born when the will was made, I mean. It seems as if it *must* make a difference."

He went to the library and took down the Statute Book, turning to Chapter XXVII, Section one, and read:

"Sec. 1. . . . That when any person hath or shall have any child or children under the age of one and twenty years, and not married at the time of his death, that it shall and may be lawful to and for the father of such child or children, whether born at the time of the decease of the father, or at that time in *ventre sa mere;* or whether such father be within the age of one and twenty years, or of full age, by his deed executed in his lifetime, or by his last will and testament in writing, in the presence of two or more credible witnesses, in such manner, and from time to time as he shall respectively think fit, to dispose of the custody and tuition of such

child or children, for, and during such time as he and they shall respectively remain under the age of one and twenty years, or any lesser time, to any person or persons in possession or remainder, other than Popish recusants:—"

She listened carefully. As he closed the book she said scathingly, "I don't wonder they put it in a foreign tongue. That would sound very harsh in English."

Then after a moment she asked, "Judge Kirtley, how does it happen that such an infamous law was ever put upon our Statute Books?"

"That is a long story, Margaret, or rather there are links in the chain that go back a long way. It does n't take much time in the telling." He was glad to turn her thoughts into a slightly different channel.

"You see, when Maryland ceded the District of Columbia to the United States for a permanent seat of government, it was provided by an act of Congress that all the laws of the State of Maryland, as they then existed, should be and continued in force in the District, or at least such part of it as had been ceded by that State."

"Did Maryland have such a law?" asked Margaret, incredulously.

"Yes, Maryland and a good many of the other states—the older ones particularly. They have been gradually modifying these laws in a number of them, but—"

"How did they ever happen to have such a law in the first place?" she interrupted. "I did not dream that such things would be tolerated in this age."

"The explanation is simple enough. When the English emigrants came to this country and founded commonwealths they brought with them ready-made the language, the laws, and the institutions of the mother country.

These had only to be modified and adapted to changed conditions that they found here."

"Then this is really an English law?"

"An English law dating back to the time of Charles II. It was originally framed to prevent the Catholics from obtaining possession of the children of a Protestant father, I believe."

"It sounds as if it might have gone back to the Dark Ages," said Margaret, indignantly, "or to barbarism! It seems so strange that I have never heard of it before."

"Not at all. Most people do not know about laws until they are touched by them."

"You say some of the states have repealed this law. Why did they do it?"

"Oh, they found it contrary to the spirit of the age, I suppose. I guess the women's rights people prodded them up a little, maybe."

"Judge Kirtley," said Margaret, after a pause in which her mind had gone from women's rights to women's wrongs, "do you suppose many women are forced to give up their children under this law?"

"Not many of your kind, Margaret. Perhaps not many of any kind. But it is a thing well known that many brutal men know of this law and hold it as a club over their wives. A lazy, good-for-nothing negro, for instance, will often make his wife support him, here in the District where there are so many of them, by using this threat."

"Oh, it is cruel! cruel!" she cried, her voice trembling with indignation.

"Margaret, I think, judging from your face just now, that if you were a man you would say of this law, as Lincoln did of slavery, 'If I ever get a chance at that institution *I 'll hit it hard!*'"

"I would! I would! If I were a man. But what can a woman do but suffer!"

"Some of them learn to fight," he said, "enough at least to defend their young."

It was in her mind to ask him further questions, but he forestalled them.

"You 'd better go home now, child, and think no more about it for a while. I will see Mr. De Jarnette and arrange to go with you to his office to-morrow."

This meeting never took place. Judge Kirtley went to Margaret's home just before night to tell her that Mr. De Jarnette had declined to talk it over with her. It could be settled much more satisfactorily with her attorney, he had said.

"I never expected him to do it," Margaret said, shaking as with a chill. "Judge Kirtley, what does it mean? Why does he shun me so?"

"My own idea, Margaret, is that he is afraid to risk talking it over with you for fear of having his resolution broken down by your tears."

"I should never go to him with tears!" said Margaret, with flashing eyes.

"I think perhaps it is just as well for you not to go," remarked Judge Kirtley, prudently. "I believe time will bring it right anyway. And don't let your fears run away with you, Margaret. He would n't think of doing anything except according to law—and the law is always deliberate. After the will is filed, with petition for probate, several weeks will have to elapse before it can be settled, even if it is settled satisfactorily to all concerned. If we find there is going to be trouble this will give us time to decide upon our line of procedure. We may have to contest the will."

"On the ground that it is unjust?"

"No. A will can be contested in the probate court only on the ground that the testator was of unsound mind and hence incapable of making a will, or that he was unduly influenced. By the way, have you ever seen anything in your husband that would lead you to think that he might be of unsound mind?"

"No," said Margaret, after a moment's thought, "not a thing. He was very passionate, but otherwise perfectly sane."

"Hm-m. And have you any reason to think that Mr. Richard De Jarnette would have tried to influence him in the making of this will?"

"No. I am sure he would never have done it. It would not have been in the least like him."

"Well, Margaret," said the Judge, dryly, "I think I will not call you as a witness in this case just yet . . . It seems to me that the unsound mind theory might be successful, in spite of what you say. These fits of passion that you speak of—anger is a short-lived madness, you know—the fact that his mother did some unexplained things; and then his unaccountable desertion of you—well, we will see."

"It seems to me," said Margaret, rather timidly, "that the plea that the will is unjust is so much more forcible than any other. Anybody can see that without argument. It is self-evident."

"Very true, but the law recognizes only these two reasons for setting aside a will. Unfortunately the laws of this District permit a man to make just such a will. It remains for us only to prove that he was mentally incapable of making one at all, or, as I said, that he was unduly influenced."

Margaret shook her head and sighed. She did not believe that either could be established.

"Now don't let your fears run away with you, Margaret. Be sensible. Mr. De Jarnette would n't harm Philip. It is absurd to think of it."

"Oh, I *am* afraid! There is no telling what he would do if he ever got hold of him. He must have some object in wanting him. And you know it is no good object."

It was useless to reason with her. Her fears had placed her beyond reason. He went away, promising to see Mr. De Jarnette again.

When he was gone, Margaret went to her room and sat down. Her strength seemed suddenly gone. She could not stand. Her head was dry and burning and her hands like ice. A thousand fears assailed her. A girl of twenty-one, shielded from contact with the world or a knowledge of its wickedness was poorly fitted to cope with such fears. They were unreasonable, of course, but Margaret did not know it.

If she could only get away where he could never find them! or at any rate until Philip was no longer a baby. She might have courage to face it when he was a few years older—but a baby was *so* helpless! And she looked despairingly at the little form lying there in the unconscious grace of sleep, the soft breath parting rosy lips, and the moist locks clustering in rings on the fair forehead.

"Oh, Mammy Cely," she cried in desperation, *"why* does he want my baby?"

The black woman shook her head. There had been no secrecy with her about the will. Her relations with the mother and child had been too close for Margaret to have any hesitation about telling her, and her own need of comfort too urgent for her to have been prudent had she had. She must talk to somebody. So Mammy Cely knew the

whole story, and was wrung between sympathy for Margaret and loyalty to "Marse Richard."

"The Lord knows, Miss Margaret!" she said, shaking her head. "It beats me!"

She turned away and began arranging the shades for the night, muttering below her breath as she did so, "Hit 's the wolf blood! That 's what it is!"

"What did you say, Mammy Cely?"

The old woman made no reply.

"Mammy *Cely!* what did you *say?*"

"Miss Margaret,—I don't want to tell you nothin' about it—maybe it ain't so anyway."

"Maybe what is n't so?" Margaret's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused.

"Why,—'bout the Jarnettes' havin' wolf hearts. That 's what they used to say. I don't know 'm. But I reckon it 's so. I thought sho' Marse Richard was gwineter 'scape it. He ain' never showed that strain befo'. But look lak it 's a curse. They can't git shet of it. Hit 's there. Fire can't burn it and water can't squinch it! Honey . . . it was Marse Richard's daddy wha' sold my little Cass away from me."

"Your baby?" cried Margaret in horror. "Sold your baby?"

"Well, she wa' n't jes as you might say a baby," said Mammy Cely, with scrupulous exactness, "but she was the onlies' one I had, and when a mother loses a child—specially her onlies' one—no matter how old it is, it 's her baby. 'Pears lak she always goes back to that.—Yaas, 'm, he sold her—down South. It 's more than thirty years sence then. And I ain't never seen her sence."

"Oh, Mammy Cely! How could you *bear* it?"

Mammy Cely looked at her with dry eyes.

"A body can bear a heap of things, honey, they think they can't when they are yo' age. I bore it because there wa' n't anything else to do. That 's why people bear most of their troubles."

"Mammy Cely, tell me about it," cried Margaret impulsively. "Sit down and tell me."

The old woman took the chair on the other side of the crib. It seemed to her that it might not be a bad thing for Margaret to get her mind upon another trouble that was greater than her own. Perhaps that was it—and perhaps she wanted to tell the story.

CHAPTER XIV

MAMMY CELY'S STORY

I HAVE N'T always lived in Maryland, Miss Margaret," Aunt Cely began. "I was born in Figinny—in Goochland County, near Goochland Co't-'ouse. I belonged to the Davidsons. They was mighty fine people, the Davidsons was. They wa' n't no po' white trash, *I* tell you! Marse Tom Davidson had mo' niggers than anybody 'roun' there. You could n' step roun' in the back yard 'thout trompin' on a little nigger. And there wa' n't no end to the company they had. Yaas, 'm, the Davidsons was mighty fine people. I have n't got no 'casion to feel 'shamed of *my* white folks."

"But you were going to tell me about your baby," reminded Margaret. She did not care for the Davidsons.

"Yaas, 'm, I 'm comin' to it. We jes' had one child, Joe and me. Her name was Cassie—Cass, we called her for short. Miss Margaret, Cass was a mighty pretty child. She looked jes' as pretty to me as yo' baby does to you, I reckon. Look lak the color don't make much difference to the mammy of a child. I was mons'us proud of her, and I useter dress her up in a little pink calico dress and ruffled white apron and set and look at her and think, 'Mammy 'll work her black fingers to the bone, honey, befo' she 'll let any harm come to you!' . . . But Mammy's fingers could n't stand 'tween her and harm."

The voice stopped and she turned away, shaking her head, mournfully.

"Mammy Cely," said Margaret, softly, "if you belonged to the Davidsons, how did you happen to be with the De Jarnettes?"

"I 'm jes' comin' to that. Look lak when I git to thinkin' of them old days I lose myself . . . Well, when Cass was about nine years old, I reckon, word come one day to the cabins that Marse Tom had been killed,—throwed from his horse against a pile of rocks. We all thought a heap of Marse Tom. I don't believe there was a nigger on that place but felt they had lost their best frien' when he was gone,—but then we 'spected to go on jes' the same and work for old mistis. But one day jes' after the fun'al a man come out from Goochland Co't-'ouse and talked a long time to old mistis, and when he went away she look so white and sick it look lak she was gwineter die too.

"Miss Margaret, I reckon you know what it meant. Marse Tom wa' n't so rich after all and de likelies' of de niggers had to be sold to pay his debts. . . . Miss Margaret, I knowed I was one of de likelies'; and I tromped over to Marse Sam Dyer's on de farm j'inin' to see ef he would n' buy me. You see he owned Joe, my old man. I jes' got down on my knees and begged him fur the love of God not to let me be sold away from Joe. He says, 'Cely, I 'd buy you in a minute ef I had the money, but I can't do it!'

"Then Joe, he says, 'Marse Sam, ef you can't buy Cely, will you let me go with her?' That was right hard on Marse Sam, 'cause Joe was born in the family, but he drawed a long breath and he says, 'Joe, I hate to let you go, but I can't stand between man and wife. Ef I can sell you to the man that buys Cely, I 'll do it,' he says.

"But Miss Margaret, the worst thing 'bout slavery was that even a good man could n' always help the partin' of man and wife. Marse Tom never sold a nigger in his

lifetime. I 've seen more 'n one nigger-trader ordered off the place! But then he never expected to die tell he was out of debt, and when he was dead old mistis could n' help it. They was *boun'* to be sold. . . . And then Marse Sam. He come down, and come down, and come down in his price for Joe, but the man that bought me did n't want him—at no price."

"Who was the man that bought you?"

"Major De Jarnette. You see, my young mistis, Miss Julia Davidson, was goin' to marry Major De Jarnette up here in Maryland, and she wrote to him would n't he buy me for her maid. Of course I 'd rather go with her than be sold to anybody else. He wrote to her that he was willin' to buy me, but he did n't want the child—that a lady's maid ought not to have a child hangin' around her. Miss Julia she wrote to him that her Ma would n't never consent to our bein' separated, and so after some letters back and fo'th he agreed to buy us both and done so. I came up to Elmhurst with my Miss Julia when she was married—and Cass with me.

"Miss Margaret, I never felt easy 'bout it after I heared he did n't want Cass. I knew it would come! Well, we stayed there nearly a year befo' it did. Then one day not long befo' Marse Richard was born Cass come dancin' in the house where I was ironin' and she says, 'Mammy, am I pretty?'

" 'Who told you you was pretty?' I says, settin' my iron down toler'ble hard.

" 'The man in the house,' she says. 'He seen me when I was goin' along and he tuk holt of my curls and said I was a pretty little gal. Am I pretty, Mammy?' Miss Margaret, hit jes' seemed lak the heart inside of me was turnin' to stone. I knowed that man. He was a nigger-trader!

"I tuk Cass by the hand and walked her off to my house

'thout sayin' a word. Then I tuk the scissors and cut off all her curls, and made her put on her old blue cotton instead of her pink calico, and then I says, 'Now you jes' let me hear of you goin' up to the house ag'in when there 's any men there and I lay I 'll make you pretty!' Then I went and seen Miss Julia and told her I was sick and would she please to excuse me this evenin'. It wa' n't no lie, for ef ever I was sick in my life I was sick then. Then I went back to my house and shet the do' and waited. I knowed it would come.

"A little befo' sundown I heared somebody at the do' and Cass started to open it. I ketched her by the arm and I says, 'You go up in the lof'—quick! and don't you come down less 'n I tell you!' Then I opened the do' and sho 'nough there stood old Major De Jarnette and the nigger-trader. Major De Jarnette he says, 'Cely, where 's Cass?'

" 'Master,' I says, 'Cass is up in the lof', sick,—she can't come down, noway.'

"He lowed he 'd see how sick she was, and then I called up, 'Cass, come here.'

"Cass come and stood lookin' at her bare feet and diggin' her toes in between the puncheons, and I declare to goodness, Miss Margaret, I did n't hardly believe it was the child myself. When I cut off her hair I did n't take no great pains, you may be sho', and now she done run her head in the cobwebs in the lof' tell her hair done look mo' lak ash color than black, and what with the old dress and the dirt streaked over her face where she been cryin', she certainly did look mo' lak po' white trash than a decent nigger child.

"I reckon the nigger-trader thought so too, for he tuk a good look at her and he says, 'This ain't the one I want. I could n't sell her to nobody.' Miss Margaret, it jes'

seem lak my heart had been standin' still and now it begun to bound. I thought I 'd got her off, sho'. But what do you suppose that child done then? She looked up at him sorter sassy like and she says, 'I *am* the gal you said was pretty, but Mammy done cut off my curls.' Miss Margaret, as skeered as I was, I felt lak takin' that child and shakin' her good! Here she was in the worst peril a gal could ever be in and losin' her onlies' chance of gettin' out because she was afraid a nigger-trader would think she was ugly! I declare to goodness it does jes' look lak women was born fools anyway! Most of 'em would rather resk fallin' into the hands of the devil hisself than to resk a man's thinkin' they ain't pretty!

"I saw in a minute it was all up. The nigger-trader tuk another look at her, and he says, 'I made a mistake. This is the one.' Then he kinder chuckled to hisself and says, 'You 're a cute one, anyway.' Then master he turned to me and says, 'Cely, I 've sold Cass. Get her ready to go in the mornin'.'

"I knowed then that my onlies' hope was in him and I got down on my knees. When I stopped he says, 'Cely, get Cass ready to go with this man in the mornin'.' That was all. Then they went off. Cass went roun' cryin' kinder sof' like and I set down to think. I thought once I 'd take her and we 'd steal off in the dark, and hide daytimes and travel nights tell we got over the line, and maybe we would find some apples or something to live on. I thought the Lord would n't keer if I did steal ef it was to save my child. I got up and started to get things together. Then I heared the bayin' of old man Dawson's hounds, and I set down again.

"I thought once I 'd go to Miss Julia, but when old Major De Jarnette had that look on his face there wa' n't anybody that dared to coax him—not even Miss Julia.

Of course, it wa' n't worth while to go to the neighbors. Major De Jarnette owned us and he had a right in the eyes of the law to sell us, together or separate. The neighbors could n't go ag'in' the law to save the partin' of mother and child. But, *Miss Margaret, ef I 'd been a white woman I would have taken that child and gone!"*

Margaret looked at her with startled eyes, but the old woman went on.

"When I set down there I says to myself, 'I will have my child! There ain't nobody can take her away from me!' But when I 'd think of one way to save her it seemed lak there was a stone wall set right down in front of me. Then when I 'd turn another way, there was that same stone wall, and I could n't do anything but beat my head ag'in' it. I thought and thought and thought tell the fire went out and Cass had gone to sleep on the flo', and at last I jes' says out loud, 'It ain't no use! I 've got it to stand! There ain't nobody can help me!'

"Honey, it seemed lak I could n't git my breath. I got up and went to the do' and looked out. The stars was shinin' kinder happy like, and when I looked up at the house I could see the lights all glimmerin' and hear the tinkle of Miss Julia's piano. It seemed lak they wa n't no mis'ry in the world, cep'n right here in this little cabin. 'What made the difference,' I said, shakin' my fist at the stars and the lights. 'What did the Lord mean by givin' me a white woman's heart, and then givin' a white man power to sell my child away from me?' He did n't know! He did n't keer!

"Honey, the Lord seemed a long way off then. Seem lak He was where there was light and music and frien's too, and did n't know my heart was breakin'. How could He know? . . . Jes' then some words come into my mind jes' lak somebody had spoke 'em to me. I had

heared 'em down in old Figinny. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only son to die—' I could n't remember the rest, but I jes' hung on to that much, and said it over and over. 'God so loved the world—that He give His only son—His *only* son—to die! God loved us so . . . His only son!' Why, He *did* know!

"I shet the do' and went and layed down on the flo' by Cass. I did n't pray. There wa' n't nothin' to pray for. I knowed it could n' be helped. I jes' said, 'Oh, Lord! Lord! *Lord!* Lord!' Miss Margaret, ef ever you 've talked to the Lord without usin' any words you 'll know what I mean. Ef you have n't, I could n't make you onderstand. 'Twas jes' lak Cass comin' and puttin' her head down in my lap and sayin', 'Mammy! Mammy!' and then I 'd put my hand on her head and say, 'Mammy knows!' and that was all.

"Well, after a while I got up and waked Cass, and the child looked at me with her big starin' eyes like she was 'feared of me. But I set down in the chimly corner and tuk her on my lap and then she was wide awake. I told her about how she had been sold and how it wa' n't likely she would ever see Mammy any mo'. But I says, 'Honey, ef you try to be good, and never steal or tell lies, or do anything that you know is wrong—*anything,* honey, no matter what it is—there 's a place we 'll git to after a while where there can't nobody part us.' And, Miss Margaret, the child stop her cryin' and look up at me, and she say, 'Where is it, Mammy? Le' 's go now.' And I says, 'It 's heaven, child!' and then she begun to cry, 'cause heaven seems a long way off, you know.

"Well, after a while I put her to bed, and then I got her clo'es ready and made 'em in a little bun'le and then I got to stud'in' 'bout who would wash her clo'es and mend 'em, and it jes' 'peared lak I could n't stand it noway.

While I was gittin' the things together I come across her big rag doll where she had jes' put it to bed—(Cass was always a mighty hand for dolls),—and I put it in the bun'le. I thought it would help her maybe to git through the first few nights. Then I laid out her clo'es, and darned her stockin's, and blacked her shoes, and when there wa' n't another thing I could do I laid down by her and tuk her in my arms like I useter when she was a baby, and laid there the blessed night, never once closin' my eyes . . . Miss Margaret, don't cry, child! I have n't shed a tear sence that night.

"Well, in the mornin' I got her ready, and when I seed 'em comin' I tuk her in my arms and looked in her face fur the las' time, and laid her little head on this old breas' where it had laid so many times, and give her one las' kiss, and then I opened the do'.

" 'She 's ready,' I says, puttin' her outside. And then I shet the do'. I heared the overseer—it was him that had come with the man—say, 'Well, she don't seem to take on much,' and the nigger-trader, he says, 'Naw, they don't have no feelin' for their chil'n.' "

She stopped. Apparently the story was at an end.

"Oh, Mammy Cely!" cried Margaret, wringing her hands, "don't tell me you never saw her any more!"

"Miss Margaret, I never laid eyes on her from that day to this. I don't know where they took her or what they did with her any more than ef the ground had opened and swallowed her up."

"Oh, I am glad, *glad* that never can be done again!" cried Margaret, vehemently. "It was a wicked thing to put so much power in any man's hands!"

She looked down at her own sleeping child with a sudden sinking of the heart, and then into the impassive face of the black woman.

"Oh, Mammy Cely! I think God has forgotten us!"

"Honey, don't say that. He don't forget!" Then, modifying this statement, "But it certainly do look lak His remembry is a heap better for men than what it is for women."

CHAPTER XV

INSTINCT TRIUMPHS

MAMMY CELY'S story made a deep impression on Margaret in her excited state of mind. She could not sleep for thinking of it. If the whole gamut of human experiences had been run, nothing would have appealed to her like this. The iniquity of the thing struck her with a force that was almost staggering. She had come of generations of slave-owners who had never known anything else than to accept conditions as they found them and do for their dependent ones the best they could. That such heart-breaking tragedies as this had ever taken place among them had never occurred to her. Personally, of course, she had seen nothing of slavery, but she had spent her life in the midst of the negroes of Washington, who seemed so irresponsible, so given to carousings, so prone to appear in the police courts, that she had never thought of them as possessing the deeper feelings of human nature. They seemed a people apart. The sad little story to which she had listened revealed the truth. God had made all women's hearts alike, and *then* had designated the color of their skins—*then* had placed them in stations high or low—*then* had made them bond or free. And when He made them mothers He touched them all with a coal from the same altar.

But it was not alone the pathos of the story, deep and tragic as that was, that kept her night after night with wide-open eyes staring into the darkness.

A formless terror was creeping over her. As she thought of the author of the black woman's miseries and his relationship to her child, it seemed almost as if Philip were in the path of some onrushing tide of evil propensities—inheritable vices that might sweep him away from her into an abyss from which she could never rescue him. Of course the wolf blood of the De Jarnettes was a thing to smile at. That was negro superstition. But the sinister fact remained that the man who had sold Mammy Cely's child, was the father of the one who was trying to get her child. If the father had been thus cruel what could be expected of the son he had reared, and to whom he had given his blood with the curse upon it? There seemed something awful to her in the thought of that curse. Where had it come from? From generations of dumb suffering mothers who could do nothing but call down maledictions? Was there really such a thing as invoking a curse that could be visited from father to son? She sat up in bed to get her breath. It did seem as if she would suffocate in this darkness.

She got up and felt for the matches, reaching frantically for them, her hands shaking, her teeth chattering. As the gas flared up she felt the relief that comes from the chasing away of shadows, and smiled a little at her own folly.

She turned the gas low . . . what was that noise? It sounded like someone at the front door. Judge Kirtley had said they would never try to take Philip by force, but—that certainly was somebody on the stairs. She listened with every nerve tense. Not a sound but the stentorious breathing of Mammy Cely in the room beyond. She had slept there ever since the baby came . . . Margaret fell back on the pillow with relaxed nerves. . . . If only the throbbing in her head would stop! She

tossed from side to side with a great physical longing for the sleep that would not come.

THE weeks that followed were hard ones for Margaret. She was worn to a shadow by her anxieties and the law's delay. At the proper time Judge Kirtley had gone before the Court and given notice that Mrs. De Jarnette would contest the will on the ground that the testator was of unsound mind.

It is not the purpose of this narrative to give the proceedings of that trial before the Probate Court. It is only the result that concerns us. It may be said in passing, however, that in no particular did Mr. De Jarnette deviate from the policy he had adopted at the first of simply falling back upon the law and the right of the testator to make such a will. "Bull dog tactics," Judge Kirtley called them to a brother lawyer. Not a word as to the unfitness of the mother to rear the child, not a breath affecting her character. The burden of proof was with the contestants,—and the contestants unfortunately were short of proof. Judge Kirtley himself did not believe Victor De Jarnette to have been of unsound mind.

Mr. Jarvis testified with great reluctance that while Victor De Jarnette was, at the time when the codicil was added, in a state of considerable excitement and strong feeling, he saw nothing about him which would lead him (Mr. Jarvis) to consider him of unsound mind. The testimony of the two witnesses to the will was to the same effect.

Men who had had business dealings with him a day, a week, a month previously were called to the witness-stand and with one voice upheld his sanity. More than one of them cast a pitying glance at the girlish, black-robed figure back of Judge Kirtley, and gave this testimony only because he was under oath.

Servants from his own household were examined as to whether they had observed anything suspicious in their employer's manner or actions,—anything that would incline them to the belief that he was of unsound mind. Not one circumstance pointing toward it was developed.

To all this counsel for the contestant could only offer the testimony of Mrs. De Jarnette as to his state of passion on that evening; the unexplained mystery of his disappearance just before the birth of his child; his sensational return unannounced; and his tragic death. This he said had been attributed to accident, but it had been by no means proved that it was not by intention. If it were a case of suicide this would be contributory proof, at least, that he was not himself six or eight months after the time of the making of the will. The case of his mother was referred to briefly, Judge Kirtley giving it as his belief that no woman who deserted her child was ever in her right mind at the time of doing it.

As Judge Kirtley spoke of the possibility of her husband's death being by his own hand, Margaret involuntarily raised her eyes to the face of Mr. De Jarnette. She was startled to find his black eyes furtively watching her. As on that day in her own library, a hot flush swept into her face and then out again, leaving it whiter than before.

Judge Kirtley in his endeavors to keep up Margaret's courage had dwelt so strongly upon the improbability of the child's being awarded to Mr. De Jarnette that he had at last inspired her with a belief that the right would win. As the case proceeded she found her confidence waning, but she was totally unprepared for the decision.

The Court sustained the will. There was overwhelming proof that the testator was of sound mind at the time of executing the will; there was no evidence introduced looking toward undue influence, and no charge made that the testamentary guardian was an improper person to

have the guardianship of the child. The law, while an ancient one, was explicit as to the right of a husband in the District of Columbia to make such a disposition of his child. It had been argued that it was a cruel and unjust law, but it might be said in reply to this that the surest way to the repeal of a bad law was to have it rigidly enforced. Therefore, etc.

"Does he get him?" The agonized whisper broke the stillness that fell upon the court-room as the decision was announced.

They took her home more dead than alive.

"It is n't a foregone conclusion that he will get him yet, my child," Judge Kirtley told her as he helped her into the house. "This is but the beginning. You are not going to give up at the very outset, are you? Keep up your courage, Margaret! You think you don't care to have Mrs. Kirtley with you to-night? Well, I 'll send the doctor is to give you something for your nerves. You are all unstrung. There! there! Here, Auntie," as Mammy Cely appeared, "take her and put her to bed. This has been hard on her."

When the old woman followed him to the door he said, "No. It went against her. I am afraid I buoyed her up a little too much. This is the reaction. Look after her."

In her darkened room Margaret lay on the couch and tried to think it out. But her head buzzed so and she was so frightfully confused! After a while maybe she could, but not now—not now!

When she went to bed she fell into fitful sleep. Her dreams were worse than her waking fears. She put out her hand every now and then to touch Philip and be sure he was actually there.

As she tossed thus on a sleepless bed, now burning with fever, now shaking as with an ague, Mammy Cely's

words suddenly recurred to her with startling distinctness. "If I had been a white woman I would have taken that child and gone." . . . Well? . . . *She* was a white woman. . . . She lay very still then. But where could she go? . . . In all the world where could she go?

A curious thing is the human brain. It has its crannies and cubby-holes where it lays away its stores as a housewife piles up unused linen. Then these treasures are covered up by other and later accumulations and we straightway forget that they exist, until some day Memory without ado deftly extricates from underneath the load a name, a fact, a story, and holds it up before us; or, opening but a crack, she bids us listen at the door, and we hear perhaps as Margaret was hearing now, a forgotten voice, saying:

"—an obscure spot, my dear. You can hardly find it on the map. But if you ever need a friend, come to me."

Her trembling ceased. Her heart was almost brought to a stop by the sudden force of a hope that flung itself across her way.

For steadying the nerves of an essentially strong person suffering temporary collapse, there is nothing like an emergency requiring action. It is the helplessness of enforced inactivity that saps courage and bears us down. As Margaret lay there holding with a death-grip to her new-found hope, she felt herself thrilled as by an electric current. Strength and courage came flowing back to the heart that a moment before had been at ebb-tide. She thought rapidly. Then she got up and looked at the clock. It was not quite twelve. She had thought it was nearly morning.

Mammy Cely was in her usual deep sleep, but Margaret took the precaution to close her door. With swift noiseless steps she dressed herself, and taking a handbag

filled it with baby garments. She stuffed a pocket book well down into the bag, having first taken from it a roll of bills and secreted them about her person. A superstitious thrill passed through her at sight of the money. It was much more than she was in the habit of drawing and it had been taken from the bank only yesterday. The teller had said to her as he handed it to her, "Mrs. De Jarnette, that is a large sum to have in the house: I should not let the amount be known to the servants—or to anybody." What had prompted her to draw so much money? Surely it was God's leading. He meant her to escape!

She went next to a drawer and took out her jewels, mostly gifts from her father, with a few simple things that were her mother's. There was a diamond brooch and earrings and necklace that had been Victor's mother's. She had forgotten them in her guilty flight, and they had come to Margaret. She put them back into the drawer and with them some gifts of Victor's that she could not bring herself just then to take, marking the box plainly, "The De Jarnette diamonds," and locking them up.

This done, she sat down with the clock before her and wrote two notes—one, a very brief one, to Richard De Jarnette. It said:

"I leave you the De Jarnette diamonds. I would willingly give up the De Jarnette money if you will relinquish your claim to Philip. But I shall *never* let you have my child."

It was in different vein that she wrote to Judge Kirtley. He must forgive her for going—she could n't help it. She simply had to go. The appeal might fail as this had. The world was so large. She was sure that she could find some place in it where she could hide away and be at peace. She had not told him because she thought it

might be better for a while for him not to know. Then, too, she had felt sure that he would try to dissuade her—and she *must* go. He would forgive her, she knew. He had been a father to her—

Here the page was blurred and the letter ended abruptly.

Sealing and directing both she placed them on the mantel in plain sight.

The car line runs past Dupont Circle and the house on Massachusetts Avenue was not far off. She would be in time for the "owl car," which would take her to the B. and O. station. She would not risk calling a carriage.

When she finished the letters Margaret took up her bag and went softly down the great stairway. A dim light was burning in the hall, and by it she made her way to the door, unlocking it and drawing back the heavy bolts. There was no sign of tremor in her hand, no fear in her face,—only a fierce eagerness to be gone. Putting the bag on the outside, and leaving the door ajar that there might be no delay, she crept noiselessly up the stairs again.

The old woman on the other side of the door slept heavily, recking little of the train of consequences her story had started. She might not have withheld it had she known. The striking of the clock admonished Margaret that she had no time to lose. She caught up the baby, bonneted and cloaked against the cold, hushed it with soft whisperings, and stole down the stairs. She did not stop to look around—perhaps she did not dare—she had come to the house a bride; she was leaving it a fugitive. The door creaked as it swung back on its massive hinges. The sound startled her. Outside the street was silent and empty. The city was sleeping its beauty sleep. She closed the door softly, pressed her baby close to her breast, and slipped out into the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE "NORTH COUNTREE"

RICHARD DE JARNETTE was sitting down to a late breakfast the next morning when his telephone bell rang. He answered it impatiently, as was natural. But what he heard there caused him to leave his hot waffles untouched and go hurrying over to the house on Massachusetts Avenue.

At Margaret's door he met Judge Kirtley, brought thither by a similar message, and together they entered the house. It was evident to Mr. De Jarnette that Judge Kirtley's surprise was as unfeigned as his own.

The servants were gathered in the lower hall in a state of great excitement, with nobody in command. Johnson, the man servant, related how he had found the front door unlocked and fearing burglary had gone straight to Mrs. De Jarnette's room and knocked and knocked without rousing anybody. Then Mammy Cely took up the tale, telling of how she had heard Johnson's knock and made sure she had overslept, etc.—of how she had gone into Miss Margaret's room and found it in confusion, and nobody there. There were two letters that—

Mr. De Jarnette cut her short by demanding to see the room and the letters. They found every evidence of a hasty flight. Drawers had been left open with their contents tumbled about, clothes were lying on the floor, and

the disordered bed showed that she had risen from it to go.

The two men read their letters hastily, but with widely different emotions. Mr. De Jarnette took the key enclosed with his and opened the drawer. The diamonds were there as she had said. He locked the drawer and handed the key to Judge Kirtley.

"As her legal adviser you will, of course, take charge of the place. These things should be put in safe keeping." Then, with a change of tone that was not pleasant, "I suppose it is hardly worth while to enquire of you where she has gone."

"I know no more, sir, about where she has gone than you do," the Judge answered, indignantly. "You can see for yourself," handing him Margaret's letter. Then he added, sternly, his face working with emotion, "I only know that she has become a homeless fugitive."

Richard De Jarnette read the letter, but his face did not soften. When he went from the house a few moments later it was to call a cab and go straight to the Detective Bureau. Mammy Cely stood looking after him as he went away.

"I wonder ef what I said about a white woman's chance to git off could a put that notion in Miss Margaret's head," she thought with some perturbation. Then defiantly, "Well, I don't keer ef it did! She got a heap mo' right to that chile than Marse Richard has. She done put a right smart of herself in him. An' Marse Richard ain't nothin' but his gyarjeen."

WHILE the enginery for tracking her was thus being set in motion in Washington, Margaret, with her child in her arms, was speeding over the country hundreds of miles away, her face set toward the West. Every mile gave

her an added sense of security. She was confident that Richard knew nothing of Mrs. Pennybacker's existence even, and was sure, too, that she had been able to get away without leaving a clue behind her at the station. It had been by a happy chance—was it chance?—that she had been able to cover her tracks there. She had gone directly to the lower waiting-room, hoping that she might find some way to get her ticket without presenting herself before the ticket agent. As she sat pondering this, a negro woman came in and sat down beside her. A sudden thought struck Margaret.

"Are you going on this next train?" she asked.

Yes, the woman said, she had been down in Virginia, and was going home. No 'm, she did n't live in Washington. She lived in Maryland. She had been gone ten days—had a round-trip ticket.

Margaret took out some bills.

"Would you mind getting my ticket for me—to Cincinnati? I can't leave my baby." She held out a silver dollar, and the woman rose with alacrity. It was not often she could earn a dollar as easily as that.

And so it came about that when the detective in Mr. De Jarnette's employ questioned the agent about tickets sold the night before, that official could remember nothing bearing upon the case. No woman with a baby had presented herself at the window that evening, he felt quite sure.

Margaret had decided that it would be safer to get a ticket to Cincinnati, another to St. Louis, and still another to Callaway than to risk a through ticket to her destination.

It was a lucky star that guided Margaret De Jarnette to Missouri, where are warm hearts and hospitable homes.

She found there the two things that she was in desperate need of—a refuge and a friend. Mrs. Pennybacker lived on a farm with her orphaned granddaughter, Bess, who was at that time at Synodical College in Fulton. She welcomed Margaret with all the warmth of a great heart and the accumulated love of two generations. And here for four years and a half the mother and child found a shelter from the storm—a covert so secure that Richard De Jarnette with all his efforts had never been able to ferret it out.

Margaret had taken every precaution to lose her identity. The name of De Jarnette was of course discarded, and she would not even risk Varnum. She was known in the neighborhood as Mrs. Osborne, a friend of Mrs. Pennybacker's from the East, who had recently been bereaved and had come to her for a quiet home. It was not an inquisitive locality, and a word from Mrs. Pennybacker as to the depth of the widowed lady's grief and her reluctance to have it referred to effectually sealed the lips of the kindly folk among whom her lot was cast. Bess, when she came home for the vacation, was told as much as her grandmother thought best to tell, and no more. "We'll take her in on probation, and after a while when she has been proved, into full communion. I am that much of a Methodist, anyway," Mrs. Pennybacker said. It is needless to say that long before this Bess was a sister in full fellowship.

Margaret was not even willing to let her safety rest upon a change of name. In her first wild fear that she might be tracked she had wanted it given out in the neighborhood that the child was a girl, but upon this Mrs. Pennybacker set her foot down hard. It was a comparatively easy thing, she admitted, to change the sex of a baby, and it did seem under the circumstances that it would be

a most innocent and inoffensive lie. But it was the nature of some lies that having been once entered into they must be persevered in to the bitter end. Margaret would find that having become entangled in this one the sex complications would grow in intricacy as the years went by. So that was given up.

The girl had written to Judge Kirtley a few weeks after reaching Missouri, telling him of her new home and her plans, and thereafter Mrs. Pennybacker received New York drafts at regular intervals. He had also written Margaret at once, informing her of Mr. De Jarnette's movements so far as they could be ascertained.

"He is very close-mouthed," he wrote, "but determined. I have reason to believe that he is keeping up a still hunt all the time. By the way, of course you must know that you have laid yourself liable to action against you on a charge of kidnapping. I am hoping that Mr. De Jarnette's feeling against you may wear itself out in time. But, in the meantime, take every precaution."

Margaret was wild with fear after this, and kept the old farmhouse locked night and day. Philip was never out of her sight. But as months and finally years went by and she heard nothing more, it seemed that Richard De Jarnette must have given up the search.

When Philip was nearly three her vigilance relaxed enough to permit her to go to California for the winter with Mrs. Pennybacker, Bess being still at "Synodical." For this trip Margaret had insisted upon dressing Philip in girl's attire. It was done half in jest, but it succeeded admirably, for a child of three is too young to object to such a metamorphosis, and it gave Margaret great comfort. She felt sure that Mrs. De Jarnette and son would never be recognized under the hotel alias of "Mrs. Osborne and daughter."

So successful had this trip been that Mrs. Pennybacker urged her going to the World's Fair the next summer. But there was too much risk there, Margaret decided, where all the world might be found. And now, this summer, some four years since her midnight flight from home, Judge Kirtley had written her that Mr. De Jarnette's counsel had told him privately he was sure that Mr. De Jarnette had abandoned all hope of ever finding his ward, and had given up the search. She grew so jubilant and buoyant in spirits after this that the natural instincts of a young woman asserted themselves, and when Mrs. Pennybacker proposed a summer at Mackinac, she made no opposition. It is hardly natural for a city-bred girl to enjoy for its own sake isolation on a quiet farm. She and Bess took up the work of planning for Mackinac with great zest. But there was one thing—if they went, Philip must go as a girl. That had given her such a sense of security on the California trip.

Mrs. Pennybacker disapproved strongly. "I tell you it is n't safe. It may get you into no end of trouble."

"I shall not go unless we can go that way," Margaret finally announced, and that settled it. Philip was told that his going depended upon his keeping the secret, and, of course, promised implicit obedience. But Philip did not then know the obloquy which attached to being a girl, nor the depth of humiliation into which it would plunge him. His long curls which had never been cut off, and his nickname, "Trottie,"—fortunately a sexless one,—aided greatly in the success of the scheme. Margaret generally called him "dearest" anyway, and Mrs. Pennybacker "baby," which he resented.

On the lake steamer they had fallen in with a Mr. Harcourt, a young man from the East whose home had once

been in Michigan, and who after an illness had been remanded by his physician to that invigorating, health-giving region of balsams and cedars for a two-months' rest. He had made himself useful to Mrs. Pennybacker in the matter of baggage just as they were starting, and he came around after they were well out on the lake courteously solicitous of her comfort. He was introduced to the girls, and took some pains to interest the child, who showed an instant liking to him. He did not intrude himself upon them, but came back up from time to time to point out a boat in sight, or to show Philip the gulls which at dinner time followed fast and furious in their wake. Finally, with Mrs. De Jarnette's permission, he took the child off to investigate the boat, saying enthusiastically when he returned after an hour, "I never saw a girl show so much interest in everything. Why, she was as intent upon finding out what made the engine go as a boy would have been . . . . Yes, I understand children—I have nephews and nieces."

Margaret had taken Philip aside after this and held an earnest conversation with him, at the end of which the child nodded several times, not very joyously,—which all goes to show the benumbing influence upon the human mind of feminine attire—and exactly how it works.

A friendship begun on shipboard culminates rapidly, especially when it is under the fostering influence of a child and a sensible elderly lady who is sure she cannot be deceived in men. By the time these travelers reached their desired haven they seemed like old friends. It was undeniable that Mr. Harcourt had contributed more than his share to the pleasure of the trip. Mrs. Pennybacker, for one, began to think with regret of the time when he would leave them—a thing that Mr. Harcourt had by this time no intention of doing.

"Well, we are almost there now," he said, coming upon them as they stood in the bow watching the Island grow in distinctness of detail.

"Did you ever see anything finer than that?"

And certainly for beauty of approach the Island of Mackinac is without a rival.

"Have you decided on your hotel yet, Mrs. Pennybacker?" he asked, a moment later.

"Yes, we 've looked it up a little and think we shall go to the Island House. They say that is near where *Anne* lived, and we thought we would like that."

"How fortunate I am," he exclaimed with instant choice. "That 's where I 'm going myself."

Bess looked away toward Round Island with slightly heightened color.

It was in this very natural way that he attached himself to their party. It proved pleasant for them all. With the child he was prime favorite. He asked Bess one day what her real name was, and Bess, forgetting that Philippa had been the name agreed upon in case the question were ever asked, and remembering Varnum, had answered with some confusion that she was named after her mother.

"Well, naturally," he had laughed. "I suppose you mean *for* her mother."

In the good-natured raillery that ensued, Bess escaped, and he always supposed the child's name was Margaret.

He had never told them where he was from, beyond the fact that he was a Michigan man, until their intimacy was well established—an accidental omission, evidently, since he had told them almost everything else in his frank, boyish way. It was, therefore, with the utmost astonishment that Margaret one day heard him speak of Washington as his place of residence.

"Washington!" she exclaimed, "I thought Michigan was your home."

"It was formerly. But for several years I have lived in Washington."

"How many years?" she asked with the air of an inquisitor.

"Four—this month." Then raising his right hand, "I would further state, if it please the court, that I am a member of that large and respectable body which pours out of the departmental halls promptly at four o'clock—

"You mean you are a clerk in one of the departments?" asked Mrs. Pennybacker. Margaret was thinking, "Well, I'm glad he is n't a lawyer or a business man."

"That is my humble occupation, madam. I hope I have n't led you to suppose that I am a cabinet officer or a justice of the Supreme Court in disguise."

"You have n't misled me into thinking you other than you are," Mrs. Pennybacker replied composedly, "and that is a fun-loving, rollicking boy!"

After this talk Margaret was most circumspect in her references to Washington. It seemed as if Mr. Harcourt would be trustworthy, "But," she told Mrs. Pennybacker that night, "I don't trust anybody."

The four were sitting on the piazza of the Island House one day late in the summer, looking out over the Straits. A steamer from Chicago was rounding the buoy preparatory to making the harbor, and they were watching it. Opposite them Round Island rose from the waters like an emerald set in translucent pearl, and across the straits to the south and miles away could be discerned the outline of the mainland. A dark diagonal smoke line across the sky defined the path of the patient little ferry which kept up communication with the outer world, and

the fraying out of the line at the further end into an indeterminate bank of cloud showed which way it was going. Far off to the left, where the waters of Lake Michigan merge into those of Huron, was another faint blur on the horizon. To the initiated, versed in signs and seasons, it stood for the steamer from Detroit. Carriages were driving swiftly to the docks to meet the incoming boat, for Mackinac's short season was nearing its end, and it behooved the emptying caravanseries to be making all the hay they could.

The group on the piazza watched the hacks with interest, two of them laying mild wagers on the results.

"I'll bet on the Island House!" said John Harcourt, "the caramels against a cigar—I to select it. Come, now!"

"And I on the Mission House," cried Bess. "And please understand that I am to specify the amount of caramels. We 'll watch and see when they come back. Now don't forget to look!"

"In the meantime," suggested Mrs. Pennybacker, "let's talk about that inland trip that Mr. Harcourt has been expatiating on. I think I should like to go down to We-que-ton-sing for a few days, and we may as well go that way. What do you say, Margaret?"

Margaret De Jarnette, who had been leaning over the railing watching the child at play on the lawn below, looked up. She was older, but her face had not lost its beautiful contour, and she had the same queenly way of lifting her head, upon which lay great masses of golden brown hair. The glint on it where it was touched by the sun hinted that it might once have been like the burnished gold of the child's long curls. Her eyes matched her hair.

"I should like to go. 'We-que-ton-sing,' with all its

breaks and musical repetitions, has an attractive sound. It seems as if we might be likely to drop into a community of wigwams there."

"That would n't be strange," said the young man, "for here we are very close to

> 'The land of the Ojibways,
> To the land of—'

Mrs. Osborne," Harcourt broke in suddenly, "that girl of yours throws exactly like a boy. Look at her now!"

"Well, this is n't settling the question," said Mrs. Pennybacker, hastily. "Mr. Harcourt, tell us some of the points of this inland trip."

John Harcourt was doing this very enthusiastically when Bess, catching sight of the returning vehicles, cried out, "Wait a minute! There come the carriages. Now let's watch."

"All right. First carriage—Mission House—empty, please note! Half a dollar, if you please. I never smoke less than fifty cent cigars on a wager."

"Well, you can just get me a pound of caramels any way," pouted the girl, "for the Island House has just one lone man."

"Oh, come! that 's a hundred per cent. more than your house has."

The one lone man was the object of their most interested scrutiny as the carriage drew up. From their seats they could see without themselves being observed.

"Why—y!" said Harcourt in surprise. "Is n't that queer! I've seen that man—in Washington."

"Who is he?" asked Mrs. Pennybacker, abruptly.

"His name is Smeltzer. He is on the detective force there, or he was when I knew him."

"Does he know you?"

"I doubt if he would remember me. Still, you can't tell. It is a part of a detective's stock in trade to remember faces . . Why, he did some work for a friend of mine once, and I used to see him sometimes."

Margaret De Jarnette leaned over the piazza rail and spoke quietly to the child playing below.

"Dearest! Come to mama now."

"Not yet, mama!" pleaded the child.

"Yes—now!"

She had been gone but a few minutes when Mrs. Pennybacker followed her to her room. She found the door locked and the young woman in the act of packing a suit case.

"What are you doing, Margaret?"

"I am going away from this place to-night," the girl exclaimed excitedly, "somewhere—I don't know where."

"You think this man is here after you?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Would he know you?"

"I can't tell. You know the case was tried in Washington, and the court-house is just across the street from the Detective Bureau. He may have been in the court-room. And, as Mr. Harcourt says, without doubt they acquire the habit of noticing faces . . . No, I won't take any chances. There is too much at stake. I am going to get aboard the first boat that comes and go anywhere it takes me. I think I shall take the ferry for Mackinaw City; but I may go back to St. Ignace if that boat is in first."

"The Mackinaw ferry will be in first," said Mrs. Pennybacker. "It will be here inside of a half hour." Then, after a moment's thought, "Margaret, why don't we all go down to We-que-ton-sing with you now? . . Why, yes, we can get ready if you can. There is nothing

to do but to pack our grips. We need n't give up our rooms. We 'll tell Mr. Harcourt that it 's a sudden inpiration. He can join us or not as he likes. I 'll speak to them at once."

When she did so, Mr. Harcourt remonstrated vigorously, having in mind the inland trip, but without avail. There was evidently something in the wind that he did not understand, and when Mrs. Pennybacker told him plainly that they would have to go whether he found it convenient to accompany them or not, he gave in.

A half hour later found them all ensconced on the deck of the ferry, Margaret with her black veil drawn down over her face. She sat where she could watch the gangway, and she saw every passenger that got on. She did not feel easy till the plank was in. But the man was not there, she was very sure of that, and she drew a long breath as the boat pushed off.

John Harcourt saw nothing but tragedy in the wreck of his plans.

"To think of that beautiful inland trip going to the bow-wows like this!" he grumbled to Bess as they sat together in the hot, dusty car enroute for We-que-tonsing. "I don't pretend to understand why we did it. I don't believe they know themselves."

"You did n't have to come," said Bess.

"Oh, well!"

CHAPTER XVII

WE-QUE-TON-SING

IN the somewhat frayed and ragged end of the mitten to which the State of Michigan has been likened is a modest bay indenting the left-hand edge, called Little Traverse, to distinguish it from another further down, where a greater rent has been raveled out.

Into this bay a long slim finger of land is thrust out from the northern shore, enclosing in its crook a harbor so safe and possible in all seas that from the earliest navigation of these waters it has been a port. The port, known in the days of New France by the more euphonious name of l'Arbor Croche, is now called prosaically Harbor Springs, but the bay, by the most fortunate reversion to an earlier occupation, is We-que-ton-sing—signifying in the Indian tongue from which it is derived, "A little one within the larger bay."

On this inner bay has grown up, among the white birches, a very beautiful little summer resort, and it was here that Margaret De Jarnette found herself after her flight from the Island. She had had a calm night and had waked with a song of deliverance on her lips. Here, surely, in this peaceful spot was nothing which could molest or make afraid.

Rising early, she had dressed herself and Philip and together they had slipped past Mrs. Pennybacker's door and on out upon the hotel piazza. The only sound of life was the clatter in the kitchen and dining-room. But

her soul was so full of relief that she had found it impossible to sleep. As she looked out over the bay, sparkling in the morning sun, her joy bubbled over, and the words of an old anthem rose to her lips. She sang it softly but triumphantly as she and Philip went out upon the pier.

"My soul is escaped,
Like a bird, like a bird,
From the snare of the fowlers,
My soul is escaped!
My soul is escaped! My soul is escaped!
My soul—is—escaped!"

There was a jubilant ascending scale at the last.

"Good morning!" came a voice from behind her. "Your body came perilously near escaping too. I am out of breath trying to catch up with you. I was glad there was water beyond, so that something could stop you!"

It was John Harcourt, every trace of last night's bad humor gone.

"Oh, good morning! Is n't this superb? I don't often sing, but this air is like wine. I think it went to my head. But then I did n't expect to have an audience this time of the morning."

"Where are the others?"

"Not up yet. They are losing the cream of the day, are n't they?" Then turning toward the water, "What place is that across the bay? It looks like quite a city."

"Petoskey. Named for an old Ottawa chief of this locality, I believe. And that place over at our right is Harbor Point."

"I noticed it last night. The lights from both places

add immeasurably to the beauty of the night scene, especially the one from the lighthouse. It throws a shaft of glowing red across the water. Did you notice it? I thought I never saw anything so lovely as this bay was by moonlight."

"It is beautiful in all its phases. I have heard it likened to the Bay of Naples. Come and take a morning walk with me. What do you say? It will give you an appetite for the broiled whitefish you will have for breakfast."

"Can I go without my hat?"

"Certainly. Nobody wears hats now but old ladies and men."

She caught the spirit of the hour. "Come, dearest, let 's see if we can't outwalk him." Philip ran up ahead in great glee.

"If you get tired, young lady, I'll carry you," Harcourt called after him.

"I can carry my own se'f," was the proud answer.

"That will fix her," said Harcourt. "I never saw a youngster so afraid of being helped."

They walked back to the broad walk running along the bay front and turned east. The walk was some distance back from the water here and lay between clumps of white birches left to their natural irregularity, but growing so thick that they formed a shadowy aisle for them to walk through.

"Now, I will be showman. This house," pointing to a square-built yellow frame house with verandas on three sides, "they say is one of the oldest on the grounds—one of the pioneers, in fact—but it does n't look it."

"It certainly has an air of solid comfort, and its owner must have had first choice of sites. See those birches there at the east—"

She broke off to say excitedly, "Oh, Philip, look! Did you see that dear little squirrel? there, running up the tree."

"'Philip'!" John Harcourt said to himself. "Well, that's queer!" He did not refer to it when they started on, and she was plainly unaware that she had used the name, but he laid it away in his memory for future reference. Philip! . . . Bess had said—

In gayest mood they wandered on down the bay until they came to Roaring Brook. Here, taking Philip's hand, Harcourt led the way under low-hanging boughs to a foot-path which took them straight into Nature's solitudes. A board walk (which seemed almost an impertinence in its newness—a parvenue except for its considerateness in walking around instead of over the gentry of the forest) followed the windings of a stream dark and shadowy. In its shallows swam schools of minnows which they watched from the rustic bridges, and flecks of sunlight fell upon it in patches here and there.

They were in a tanglewood of tall timber—mammoth cedars that looked centuries old, and lofty elms and maples and hemlocks lifting their heads defiantly. But it was a pitiful defiance after all, for on every side lay fallen giants that had succumbed as they must one day succumb to a force stronger than themselves, and their stricken forms, their outstretched arms told of the vanquishment. Not even the mosses and the friendly vines clambering from limb to limb could hide their shame.

"Oh, this is nature's tragedy!" cried Margaret. He had observed in her a habit of endowing inanimate objects with life, and suffering or rejoicing with them. "They had to give up! They simply had to give up to a power that was mightier than they!"

"If they had only bent," he said, "they might have been standing yet."

"How can an oak bend?" she cried. "Even a tree must live according to its nature, and then—when the storm overpowers it—go down. So must we all."

He stood idly throwing pieces of bark into the black depths of the stream and watching them float off. He was thinking, "What an intense creature she is!"

When next she spoke it was to repeat the opening lines of Bryant's "Forest Hymn,"—her hands clasped on her heaving breast and her head thrown back. It would not have surprised him much if she had dropped to her knees and begun crossing herself, or have prostrated herself upon the walk, her forehead in the dust.

"It is not altogether flattering to my vanity," he mused, "but I'll bet a nickel she has forgotten that I am in the world. She is up in the clouds to-day for some reason. And yet—I could bring her down with a word—one little word." A boyish impulse came over him to try it. He called softly to the child who had run on up the walk,

"Philip!"

And yet more softly,

"Philip!"

She turned toward him with a look of such abject terror that he repented the experiment. The color had simply dropped from her face, leaving it white and rigid.

"Why do you call him—why do you use that name?" she asked with dry lips.

"I heard you say it."

"I?" she said incredulously, "when?"

"Not a half hour ago. It sounded to me as if you dropped into it from habit."

She laughed uneasily, but her color was coming back. "Her name is Philippa. You probably heard me say that and thought I said Philip. She—she does n't often get her real name."

He was looking at her with a quizzical smile. He knew

from Bess—or thought he did—that the child's name was Margaret.

"You don't lie as if you were used to it," he said coolly. "Try it again."

"How dare you talk to me like that?" she cried. "And by what right do you question me?"

"I have n't questioned you. What you have told has been told voluntarily. I hardly think you would stick to it if I *should* question you, but I have no intention of doing it." Then he came nearer to her and spoke very seriously.

"Mrs. Osborne, I beg your pardon for speaking as I did. My foolish habit of flippancy has misled me into doing a thing I had no right to do, or rather into speaking in a manner that I had no right to use toward you. I really think that my friendship for you, which you have not forbidden, at any rate, does give me the right to put you on your guard. I have not the remotest idea of the reason for the deception that you are practising, but surely it is a dangerous thing to keep it up."

His kindly tone and the manliness of his apology completely disarmed her.

"Oh," she said, clasping her hands in distress, "it is because there is so much at stake that I must keep it up. I am driven to it."

They were walking along the woodsy path now, but neither was noticing tree or fern or stream. After all, it is the human interest that overpowers every other.

"I do not wish to force your confidence, but—if I could help you—"

She shook her head. "You cannot help me. There is only one person in all the world that could help me, and he—"

She broke off abruptly, saying later, "Mr. Harcourt, I

—I cannot explain, but will you not trust me that it is all right?"

"You have not set me a good example in trust," he said, looking down into her troubled eyes, "but certainly there has been nothing to shake my confidence in you—except in your judgment. If the time ever comes that I can help you, you know where to find me."

She put out her hand and he held it for a moment in his. Then looking at his watch he said, "I think it is time we are getting back." He whistled to Philip who was still proudly walking ahead, and when he came back took him by the hand and relieved the situation by devoting himself entirely to the child, showing him all manner of wonderful things that the woods contained.

He did not speak to Margaret again until they were in the bay path, and then it was only to call her attention to the different kinds of evergreens growing along the road, and to show her how to identify them.

Over the broiled whitefish at breakfast they discussed their walk and plans for the day. Harcourt was his old irrepressible self, and Margaret's equilibrium was restored though he noticed that her buoyancy of the early morning was gone. He could not help wondering many times through the day what the trouble was that so darkened her life, and who the one person was who could help her.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, two days later, they all sat on the piazza talking intermittently. It seemed very pleasant to sit idly watching the changing lights on the water, and listening to the sound of the wind blowing where it listed. Around them was the faint hum of the insect world that somehow tells us summer is nearly gone. One by one they had declined the bay trip that Mr. Harcourt had proposed. He turned his atten-

tion then to an acorn basket he was carving for Philip, looking up after a while to remark, "By the way, I ran across that man Smeltzer up at the station a little while ago. Strange that he should come to a place like this for his vacation, is n't it? You'd think now—"

"Did you talk with him?" interrupted Mrs. Pennybacker, looking startled.

"Yes. I had some curiosity to see if he would remember me . . . Oh, yes, perfectly."

"Is he registered here?"

It occurred to Harcourt that Mrs. Pennybacker was taking an unusual interest in Smeltzer.

"Must be, I guess. This is the only hotel on the grounds. He says he has left Washington. I rather guess from something he said that he is with the Pinkertons."

Margaret had risen hastily and gone to the end of the porch.

"Who are the Pinkertons?" asked Bess.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

"WHERE is Philip?"

Margaret put the question in a low, tense voice to Mrs. Pennybacker who had followed her.

"He was down there at the spring just a moment ago."

He was not there now, and Margaret went quickly down the steps and looked up and down the avenue in front of the hotel and down to the pier. He was nowhere in sight. She turned into the walk leading west, motioning Mrs. Pennybacker to take the other direction.

"Well, my audience seems to have melted away. What's the occasion, I wonder. I have almost lost the thread of my discourse."

"You were talking about the Pinkertons," said Bess, who was herself consumed with anxiety, but kept up her end of the log bravely. "I think they are looking for Philip." It had been a relief to them all to drop his aliases. "Suppose we walk up towards the station. Perhaps he is there."

Mr. Harcourt's little piece of news had thrown Margaret into the greatest alarm. What but a purpose, and that a menacing one, would bring a detective from Washington to We-que-ton-sing? She had no faith in Smeltzer's change of residence. She was wondering as she hurried on whether she would know him if she should

come upon him. There was nothing she could recall about his appearance except that he wore a gray suit and had a big mustache—black, she thought. . . . . Where was Philip? What if this man should have spirited him away already?

Her fears proved groundless, however, for as she peered anxiously up the first grass-grown avenue on which foot of beast was not allowed to step, there just beyond where the spring—set round with ferns—bubbles from its cement confines, she saw him standing in front of a tiny bungalow. It was a modest, unpretentious place, but she had noticed it before, for such a luxuriance of plant life enveloped it that it stood out with a distinction all its own, even in this place of beautiful homes.

A curtain of climbing nasturtiums veiled the south end of the piazza, a riotous growth of scarlet geraniums and foliage plants and trailing green things made a hanging garden round the porch, and the delicate Alleghany vine twined itself about a hardier colleague and ran races with it up the posts and round the eaves, and then—grown tired—dropped down again in graceful sprays that responded to every wooing breeze.

"Those flowers grow in an atmosphere of love," Mrs. Pennybacker had said the day before in passing by, "and if I am not mistaken their roots are planted in the soil of patient care and intelligent plant knowledge."

By the side of this porch garden stood a little lady in a red shawl which glowed among her greens and matched her geraniums, and at her side, his hands full of flowers, was Philip.

"Why, dearest!" cried Margaret across the lawn. Then in apology to the lady, "I hope my little one has not troubled you."

"Not in the least. She stood and looked so longingly

at the flowers that I called her in. Even then she only said, 'Do you think you could spare me just one?' "

Margaret laughed. "That was modest, certainly, but a little suggestive. The child is really unusually fond of flowers."

"I thought so. I can always tell when the true love is there. I often hear grown people say, 'I am fond of flowers, but I don't know much about them.' I say to myself, 'You have n't the true love or you would know.' " Then looking down at the child, "I am always glad to share with those who have it, especially little girls that ask so nicely for them. It is when they come and pick them without asking that I don't like it. You would n't do that, would you, little girl?"

Philip shook his head and looked pleadingly at his mother. The look being interpreted said, "This seems to be a very pleasant lady. Could n't I just tell her?"

Her eyes denied him.

"You have a beautiful location here. And I think it must be your own home."

"It is. I come early and stay late."

"We-que-ton-sing is a lovely spot. These glimpses of the water are charming."

As they looked down toward the bay, her grasp on Philip's hand tightened. He looked up at her in wonderment and tried to draw away, but she held him as in a vise. At the entrance to the avenue, just turning into it was a man with a big mustache and a gray suit. She was sure it was the one she had seen at the Island House. He was headed toward her.

"Come, dearest! We must go. No, not that way." And with a hasty word to their surprised acquaintance of the bungalow, she hurried him down the walk leading to the railroad tracks, stopping to cast a glance behind

her as she turned east. The man was sauntering up the walk, just as everybody did when they first came here —there was really nothing to alarm her—it was foolish of her to suppose that he was after them—but still, the corner turned she made Philip run to keep up with her in her haste. At the corner where the post office stands she turned down toward the hotel, but the boy seeing a squirrel across the street escaped from her grasp and ran after it. Calling him sharply Margaret followed. A glance back showed through the trees a glimpse of the gray suit and she hurried on.

As she caught up with Philip she found herself in front of a pretty cottage close to the walk with hanging baskets and rustic boxes filled with ferns around its many porches. A sweet-faced woman was sitting at a table writing. She looked up at the child with a smile, such a kind, gracious smile, that for a moment Margaret contemplated throwing herself on her mercy and begging shelter. But just then others came out upon the porch and the opportunity was past.

They had come now to the back of the yellow, square-built house that Mr. Harcourt had pointed out to her as a pioneer. She had noticed it often since. Philip, again catching sight of the squirrel in the clump of birches with the hemlock growing sociably in their midst, dashed after it, and Margaret after him. As she turned into the yard under the spreading beech trees and dodged behind them, a backward look showed her the man in the gray suit standing on the post office corner, looking as if he had lost a clue.

A tall lattice divided the back of this place from the front. In an instant Margaret had caught up Philip and dashed to the other side of it. She was leaning

weakly against it and Philip saying, "Why, mama! what's the matter?" when a door opened in front of her and a tall lady in black appeared.

"Well?" she said in surprised interrogative which was not in the least aggressive. It was as if she only meant to understand before she passed judgment.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but my little b—my little girl ran into your yard after a squirrel and I came to get her. I—I feel very faint. Would you mind my sitting down?"

"Certainly not. Come in." She opened the door through which she had come out and Margaret, who had supposed the door led into the house, found herself on a long, broad porch at the side of the house and looking out upon the bay in front. There were curtains on the east side, and it was a homelike place with rugs and rocking chairs and tables and books. But to Margaret's excited imagination it was but a place where one could be spied out and trapped.

"You will find it more pleasant here nearer the front," the lady said, but the girl drew a chair into the furthest corner, saying something about the wind, and sat down with Philip held tightly in her arms. Then desperate with the fear that any moment might bring her enemy upon her, she asked in a choking voice,

"Is—is there a place that I could lie down?"

"Why, certainly, come right in and lie down on my sofa."

Inside the room which had a glazed door and a broad window looking out over the water, Margaret hesitated and then, instead of lying down on the old-fashioned mahogany sofa, drew close to her rescuer.

"I am not ill," she said, seizing the soft hand of the

elder woman and speaking quickly, "it was only an excuse to get inside. But I am in deep trouble. Will you not help me?"

"How can I help you, my child? What is your trouble?"

"A man is following me—is trying to get my child. I don't know whether he saw me come in here or not, but if he comes—oh, do not let him get us!"

"He shall not see you if you do not wish to be seen."

"But if he should force himself in?"

"He will not try that, I think." Then, with gentle, courteous directness, "Is this man your husband? Has he any right to the child?"

"Oh, no—no. My husband—" She hesitated, took one more look into the strong, forceful face before her, and trusted it. "My husband is dead. I have n't time to explain, but his brother is trying to get my child. Oh! there 's that man now!"

For a step was heard on the west porch and coming around to the glazed door.

"Go into that bedroom," said the lady quickly, pointing to an open door. "And don't be afraid."

It proved to be a boy distributing notices. As the lady went outside to pick the paper up she looked around casually. The ferry-boat was nearly in and several persons were hurrying down the pier to meet it. A man in a gray suit was standing on the sidewalk but a few feet from her west porch, looking as if he were undecided about something. As she turned to go in he raised his hat and spoke.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I am looking for a lady and a little boy, friends of mine that I have got separated from. Perhaps you have—"

"I saw a lady and a little child pass here a few minutes ago," she said quietly. "Are they the ones down there on the pier? I don't see very well."

He looked in the direction indicated. A woman about Margaret's build with a child was hurrying toward the boat. With hasty thanks he started after them.

When Margaret, trembling, came out from the inner room the lady had taken a glass that she always kept on her window ledge and turned it on the man hurrying to the dock.

"What sort of looking man was this?" There was something about her quiet manner with its reserve force that quieted the frightened girl.

"He had a black mustache—a very long one—and wore a gray suit. I can't remember anything else."

"This is the one, I am sure. Well,—he asked me for information and I gave it to him. I should not have volunteered it . . . Still, I am not sure but it was a falsehood, though it was the truth. I really suppose a thing can sometimes be both, don't you? . . Here, your eyes are younger than mine—take the glass. Can you see him?"

"Yes," cried Margaret, excitedly. "The boat has stopped and he is running to make it. Oh, he won't get there! They are taking in the plank! . . . No, they are waiting for him. He has got on! The boat is pushing off and there is n't a soul left on the dock!"

"Then you are safe for a while at least. It will take him the best part of an hour to get back. What are you going to do now?'

"I must leave this place—at once!" cried Margaret. "Can you tell me about the trains?"

"Yes. They go to Petoskey every half hour. But

this is a dummy line and ends at Petoskey. Shall you risk staying there? The place is very accessible from We-que-ton-sing."

"No, I should n't dare to do that. We will go back to Mackinac as soon as we can get a train out of Petoskey."

"I should lose no time. You could hardly be ready for the next train, which comes in fifteen minutes, but if you make the one following it will connect you with the G. R. and I. for Mackinac."

"Oh, thank you so much. It is such a help to know this."

At parting, Margaret pressed her lips to the elder woman's soft cheek. "You have been so good to me! I knew I could trust you!"

On the porch Philip turned back. A chipmunk had just run up the steps and stood looking at them. "Are the squirrels your children?" he asked politely.

"My children?" She was not used to the fanciful vagaries of a child's brain. "No, my dear, I have n't any children."

"Oh!" said Philip, disappointed. "The other lady said the flowers were *her* children, and I thought maybe the squirrels were yours . . Goodby!"

When Margaret got to the hotel Mrs. Pennybacker was partly packed. She had foreseen what the next move would be. John Harcourt swore softly.

"She is the most capricious woman I ever saw!" he declared to Bess on the dummy. "Now we 're cheated out of that inland trip again!"

"Suppose you stay over and take the inland trip alone," she suggested. "Then you could make sure of it. We have n't any baggage that needs attending to."

"I suppose I am needed only in the capacity of baggage tender," he reproached her.

At Petoskey, after putting them on the train, he stepped outside and delayed his coming back until Bess began to wonder if he had taken her at her word. But he swung himself on as the train started.

"I've just seen Smeltzer out on the platform. Funny how I run across that fellow! He's on his way to Chicago. Says We-que-ton-sing is too slow for him. Had to go to Harbor Springs to get a drink."

Margaret, in her safe corner, with Philip close beside her and the train speeding away from Smeltzer, was thinking, "I wonder if that could all have been imagination. Perhaps he was n't the man at all!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

THE morning after they got back to Mackinac Margaret invited Mr. Harcourt to take a walk with her, and for almost the first time since he had known her she left Philip behind. Bess looked at them a little wonderingly when they went out, and still more so when they returned, for Margaret's face showed traces of tears and John Harcourt was unusually serious.

She had led the way to the fort steps and on the top landing where so many confidences have been shared, she told him her story. She had agreed with Mrs. Pennybacker the night before that the time had come now when he should be told. It seemed almost his right. She had told it very simply, not striving after effect; but the pathos of that story was in the situation, not in any words that might be used to depict it. Harcourt was strongly moved by what he heard.

As they neared the hotel on their return she said to him, "I am known here only as Mrs. Osborne. Perhaps you 'd better continue to call me so."

"Let me call you Margaret," he begged. "I cannot bear to call you by a false name and I do not dare to use your true one." And she consented, for she felt that her confidence, far more than anything that he could call her, had set the seal upon their friendship.

After this he fell into the habit of looking out for her,

of going to the boats when they came in and haunting the hotels. True, Smeltzer had told him he was on his way to Chicago, but he had not implicit confidence in that gentleman's word. But though he kept up a close surreptitious watch, no Smeltzer appeared.

It was perhaps a week after this that the party with the exception of Mrs. Pennybacker started off for a two days' trip up to the "Soo," as the interesting little town of Sault Sainte Marie, with its rapids and its great ship canal, is called.

They went off in high spirits, and a little later Mrs. Pennybacker saw their handkerchiefs waving to her from the little steamer, *John A. Paxton.* Indeed, Margaret had seemed like another person after learning that Smeltzer was on his way to Chicago. That proved to her that he was not looking for her, or that he had given up the search in this part of the country at any rate. There was probably no safer place for them anywhere now than right here.

The boat was almost ready to start when they reached it, and they lost no time in securing good places on the landward side of the stern where they could see all that was to be seen of the receding island. This took them away from the dock side, to Philip's great distress, and Margaret said at last,

"Go over to that side where you can watch them if you want to." Philip joyfully obeyed, and from the deck looked down with a child's interest on the moving life below. This was immensely more interesting to him than any view of land or sea could be.

He was not alone in the feeling. A man below who was evidently not a dock hand stood idly scanning the people on deck. A little child with long curls and a girl's hat and dress leaned over the railing. The man had

formed the habit of noticing children, a very pleasant habit in any one, but somewhat unusual in a man of his type.

"Hello, little girl," he called up.

Philip ignored the friendly greeting. The situation was very cruel. It was bad enough to have to wear these detestable girl's clothes, but to be taunted with femininity by a person he had never in his life seen before—this was rather too much. His mother had cautioned him never to speak to strangers and never upon any account to disclose the secret of his sex—but his mother was now at the other side of the boat and he felt sure he was leaving this man for good. The *John A. Paxton* was even now drawing in her cable. He looked around him, dropped his voice to a safe pitch, and announced defiantly as the boat pulled off,

"I is n't any girl! I'm a boy!"

"The—devil you are!" the man said, whistling softly, and swung himself over the low rail.

THE marine view with Mackinac receding in the west is not so beautiful as the approach from the other side, but it was attractive enough to enlist the close attention of our party as long as there was a green shore in sight.

"Upon my word," said Harcourt at last, looking off to the north, "there is the light-house that tells us we will soon be at our first stopping-place. I'll go down and see what the chances are for dinner."

He came back in a few moments and drew his chair close to Margaret.

"I don't want to alarm you unnecessarily, but I am afraid there is trouble ahead of us. I have just seen that fellow Smeltzer again . . . Yes, down on the lower deck."

Margaret called Philip to her and caught him up with a despairing gesture. "Do you really suppose he is after us?" she asked with dry lips.

"I am afraid he is. I should n't have said anything about it if it had n't been for a word I overheard him say to the captain about his being an officer and authorized to take 'them' into custody when he reached the 'Soo'."

"But what can I do?" asked Margaret. "There is no possible chance now to get away."

"I think," said Harcourt, after a moment's thought, "that I would take a stateroom and keep Philip out of sight until I can have a talk with the man. I will try to make an opportunity without exciting his suspicions. If I find out definitely that it is you he was talking about I think perhaps it might be well for you to invoke the captain's assistance,—and don't lose heart; we have the day before us in which to concoct some scheme to outwit him."

"But on the water—" Margaret said despairingly.

She went at once to see the stewardess about a room, Philip—frightened and mystified at her still face—clinging to her, and Bess following, not much less alarmed.

The stewardess was a buxom Irish girl, and if ever a face indicated a good heart it was Norah Brannigan's. Looking into it and realizing her sore need of a friend, Margaret called her into the room after she had sent Bess back to Mr. Harcourt, took the woman's freckled hand, and poured out her sorrows and her fears. . . And would she not help her?

In her desperate need she had thrown herself upon an utter stranger, but she had not read amiss the honest face.

"'Will I help you?' Sure, mem, and it is Norah Brannigan will do that same! I wud do it for the swate eyes of ye, darlint, to say nothin' o' divilin' that black-hearted

vilyan—come aboard a dacent boat for the purpose o' stalin' your b'y, bad luck to him! And what is it ye was wantin' me to do, mem?"

"I want you to hide us,' said Margaret hurriedly, brought face to face with the emergency by Norah's question,—"hide us anywhere you can about the boat—down in the hold, if you have n't any other place." She said it with a vague remembrance of the stowaways crossing the ocean thus. "And then tell him that we are not here—that we have fallen overboard—anything—to throw him off the track." Then, with sudden fear, "Would you mind telling what was not true to save my boy?"

"Divil a bit wud I moind!" said Norah, with a snap of her brown eyes. "Sure, mem, it wud rej'ice the heart of Norah Brannigan to lie to a vilyan loike that—bad luck to him!—st'alin' women's childer that they have borne—Ah-h! they 're a bad lot, mem, is men—a bad lot!—barrin' Michael Callaghan, who is as foine a b'y as ye wud wush to see. There's few loike him—more's the pity! But whisht now, who is this divil you're a-fearin' and what is he loike?"

Margaret described the man as far as she was able.

"I seen him!" cried Norah Brannigan. "I seen him shtandin' on the dock a-talkin' to this blissed child jist as we was castin' off—after the plank was in—and then he took a handspring, he did over the rail."

"Philip!"

"Mama! . . mama!" . . I did n't say anything—only—only—" It ended in a burst of weeping.

"Only what, Philip?" She was wild with anxiety. "Tell mama what you said."

"Only that—that—mama! . . I thes told him—I—was n't—any—girl-1!"

"Oh, Philip! Philip!"

While mother and son were thus reckoning their accounts Norah Brannigan had on her thinking cap, and this article on the head of an Irish girl often covers quick wits.

"You are dead sure, mem, that this man will get the child once we reach the 'Soo'?"

"Oh, yes, yes! I am perfectly certain of it now."

"Well," said Norah Brannigan, with an encouraging wink of her left eye, "what's the matter wid givin' him the shlip?"

"How can I—away off here in the Lake?" Margaret asked despairingly.

"We are not in the Lake now, mem, nor in the Straits of Mackinac, nayther. We are at this moment enterin' St. Mary's River, mem, and sure it is a good omen that it is named for a mother that had to run off wid her own child. Pray to her, mem! pray to her!" Then, her religious sense appeased, she went on with shrewd acumen, "And wud ye take a chance, now?"

"I would do anything! anything!"

"And cud the gur-l or b'y, whichever it is by that time—" she was looking down sternly at Philip, winking one eye at Margaret meantime— "cud he be depinded on, mem? because," added Norah Brannigan, cruelly, "ef he should turn baby now, and git skeered—and cry—or blab—" she spoke slowly, that he might take it all in, and Philip was regarding her with the closest attention—"why, he wud upset our whole kittle o' fish, mem."

Philip turned to his mother with the most earnest protestation.

"Mama, I *won't!* I won't cwy—or—or b-blag—or upset any fish!"

"I think," said Margaret, taking the little tear-stained

face between her palms and looking searchingly into his eyes, "I think—I believe—that he can be depended on. Now, what is your plan?"

The stewardess took her to the stateroom window and pointed over to the mainland at the left.

"Ye see them houses, and the shmoke—there just beyant the light-house on the point?"

"Yes, yes."

"That, mem, is Detour, our first shtop. Within the hour we 'll be there, and—"

"Well?"

"—and there," said Norah Brannigan, with a nod and a significant closing of her left optic, "is where we give him the shlip."

"Oh, we can't! we can't!" cried Margaret, in despair. "Don't you know that he will be on the watch for everybody that leaves the boat? If there was only somebody there to help us!" Margaret groaned. "But alone—"

"Sure, mem, and there is."

"Who?"

"Michael Callaghan."

"And who is Michael Callaghan?"

"A dock hand at Detour,—and as foine a b'y as ye cud wush to see." Then with a very conscious look on her honest face, "And what Michael Callaghan wuddent do for Norah Brannigan—why, mem, it can't be done! Now, set down here on the berth, darlint, and let me tell ye me plan."

As the *Paxton* made the landing at Detour Bess and John Harcourt stood on deck just above the gangway and watched the scene with interest, though it must be confessed that Bess had many disturbing qualms of conscience at enjoying anything while Margaret, shut up

in her stateroom, was in such straits. She felt that she ought to go and share her isolation, but Mr. Harcourt had pointed out that if Smeltzer happened to be sauntering around it would be better for it to appear that they were not on their guard. He convinced her that there would be ample time for conference and sympathy after they left Detour, and she might as well see what was to be seen there. There is something very fascinating about watching a boat's unloading at a country landing, and in the end she yielded and stayed, compounding with her conscience by a vow to go the minute the boat started again.

Detour is on the west side of St. Mary's River and has an unusually broad dock with a warehouse at the right, and another much farther back on the left. This makes a broad frontage which was unbroken that day by even a goods-box or a barrel. If Norah Brannigan was hoping to hide her proteges behind a chance pile of lumber or the usual impedimenta of a dock, there seemed scant hope for her here. Detour had all the time there was, and used it in taking care of her freight. The road trailed off up the hill where was "the store," a blacksmith's shop, and a somewhat pretentious hotel. On the dock lounged half a dozen men who enlivened the time of waiting by sparring with one another.

A coil of rope was thrown out to one of them who caught it with a dextrous hand. In a moment the great cable was over the post and the *John A. Paxton* crunching against the timbers of the dock. Then the gangway was shoved out and the passengers were going off.

"How many do you say will get off?" said Harcourt. "Quick!"

"Oh,—twenty."

"Twenty! I'll say four—caramels against a cigar."

"All right!"

One man followed by a dog had already stepped ashore. A country woman, in a blue calico with a dejected looking back and a sunbonnet, followed, and then a half-grown boy. That was all. The dock hands brought out a couple of plows, a crated sewing machine, and a white iron bedstead with brass knobs. Then they went aboard and reappeared in a minute with a line of wheelbarrows loaded with soap boxes, nail kegs, etc. Detour evidently bought by the small quantity.

"Are the passengers all gone?" asked Bess, incredulously. "Surely that is n't all."

"That's all. I've won as usual."

"You did n't win! You said four and there were only three."

"Four!"

"Three. Just three."

"Three? You can't count. There were four passengers—two men, one woman, and a dog. There! fifty cents, please!"

The last wheelbarrow, trundled by a sturdy Irish lad, had in it a clothes-basket with a blue-check apron tied neatly over it.

"Look out there, Moike!" cried the stewardess, springing to the side of the basket and steadying it across the narrow gangway. "Don't ye drop me table linen or—ye might git dropped yeself—see?" She said it with a saucy air and leaned toward him threatening a friendly cuff which he dodged while the man in front looked back and laughed good humoredly. "Give it to him!" he said.

"She just wants to flirt with him," said Harcourt. "That's the way you all make fools of us. Well, I don't suppose they have much to enliven their days."

As he said, it was not much time that Norah had with her sweetheart that day, but it was enough. As the cable was pulled in she called out gayly, "Put them clothes in the warehouse, Moike, till the wash-lady comes. She 'll be there 'gin two o'clock."

The woman in the blue calico was toiling up the dusty street. She had not waited to see the unloading.

As the boat headed up-stream Bess started up.

"I *must* go and see about Margaret. I feel too mean for anything!"

"Wait just a minute and see these islands. Are n't they pretty?"

They were indeed, and of assorted sizes,—some, tiny disks of green—some, larger, with low grassy banks extending out from the copse like a green fringe—and beyond, the wooded shores of St. Joseph which looked as if it might be the mainland. But Bess would not stay to see.

She was not gone long. When she came back she looked cautiously around and went close up to him.

"Margaret is gone!"

CHAPTER XX

SELF-CHAPERONED

"GONE! Gone where?"

"Don't talk so loud. She got off at Detour, and is going back to Mackinac on the down boat this afternoon."

"Why, how could she have got off at Detour?" he asked incredulously. "We saw every living soul that left the boat. There was only one woman."

"And that one was Margaret—the one in the blue calico."

"Well, I 'll be—jiggered!" he said, most inelegantly. "We are two babes in the woods, are n't we? I hope Smeltzer will be as dead easy. And, by Jove! I think he was for I saw him standing right by that gangway as she went off!"

"*Don't* talk so loud!"

They went then up into the bow beyond the chance of being overheard, and he asked breathlessly, "Where is Philip? and why did she leave him?"

"Leave him? Why, she would n't leave Philip any more than she would leave an arm. He went with her."

"Do you mean to tell me," he said severely, "that Philip too walked off before our very eyes and we did n't know it? I suppose he went as the dog?"

"Do you remember what was in that last wheelbarrow?"

"No. Wait! let me think. Was that the one with the

clothes-basket in it that the stewardess helped the man off with? She said it was her table linen."

"Well, for a man that can guess at the number of passengers and their destination as you can—making your cigars off of innocent, trusting, unsophisticated damsels, you certainly are at times most astonishingly dull."

"Do you mean to say that Philip was—"

"Why, of course, tied down snugly under the blue check apron."

"Well, by George, he was game! And that stewardess! I hope she will get her reward in heaven."

"She 's getting a part of it on earth. When Margaret found that the woman would n't take money for her help she took off her watch and gave it to her, telling her that she must wear it because it was hers, and Miss Brannigan is now shut up in a stateroom, pinning and unpinning in a most ecstatic state of mind, and saying, probably as she was when I left her, 'And sure, mem, what will Michael Callahan think of me now wid me gould watch and pin?' "

"Did she leave a letter or anything?"

"Yes, just a note for me. Most of it was taken up with telling me how sorry she was to leave me in such a position, but how she could n't help it—that it was her one chance and she must take it—that Norah would tell me all the details—and that I would know by the time the letter reached me whether it had failed. Mercy! if she only gets off with him she need n't think of me! Anyway, it is n't as if I were left by myself. Of course grandma will be uneasy about me—she is so afraid of water—but she will be glad I am with you. I know that because I heard her tell Margaret one day that she knew you were a man that could be trusted."

"You bet I am!" thought Harcourt, looking down into

the innocent girlish face. Aloud he said, "What do you think we 'd better do?"

The aspect of the case that troubled Margaret had already appealed to him.

"Why, there is n't anything we can do but go on, is there?"

"Nothing that I can see—unless I put you in another basket and chuck you off at Sailor's Encampment. That's the only stop between Detour and the Soo . . Say!"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing." It was not worth while to alarm her, but a startling thought had struck him. Suppose Smeltzer, finding out that she had escaped him, should get off at Sailor's Encampment, wait for the down boat, and be on it waiting for her when she took it at Detour . . . Then he felt sure that the quick wit that had thought of a way of escape in the first place would have thought of that. The stewardess was acquainted with the time schedule if he was not. Still, the fear haunted him until they had left Sailor's Encampment behind them, and looking down he saw Smeltzer below at the gangway. It was funny the way Smeltzer hugged the gangway when they made a landing.

After that he gave himself up to a boyish enjoyment of the trip. They were there without a chaperon, it was true, but it was through no fault of either one,—and it was all right. The trouble almost always was with the gossip that such things gave rise to, not in the things themselves, and here there was nobody to gossip. Still he had it on his mind, and said to Bess just before getting into Sault Sainte Marie, "You have n't any acquaintances here that you could spend the night with?"

"Not a soul."

"Would you like for me to look you up a quiet boarding house?"

"Why, no, I think not—just for one night. We start down early in the morning, don't we?"

"Yes."

After a pause during which he did some thinking, he said again:

"Perhaps I 'd better take you to the Iroquois and go down myself to the house just below. I forget the name."

"Why, no," she said, surprised. "I'd rather go where you go. I don't think grandma would want me to be at a hotel alone."

He gave it up then.

When they reached the dock Smeltzer was the first man to step ashore. He took his station beside the gangway. He had watched it from the time they had left Mackinac and he was not going to be cheated out of his reward now. There was an exultant look in his eye, it seemed to Harcourt, as from the upper deck he watched the man.

"You'd better go on ahead," he said to Bess, "and among the first. I will catch up with you. No, I don't know that he associates me at all with your party, and I don't even know that he would recognize you as belonging to it, but it is just as well to be on the safe side."

He saw her run the gauntlet unchallenged. Smeltzer was looking for a woman and a child. He had spent the last few minutes before the boat stopped in studying a picture he had in his possession. One after another passed out, but no woman and child. Harcourt could have jumped up and down with delight to see Smeltzer's look of anticipated triumph merge slowly

into anxiety and then to mystified chagrin. Nothing but a realization that it might be an awkward position for him prevented his staying to witness the detective's interview with the captain. That one was impending was evident from the man's face. The last passenger to leave the boat was Harcourt.

"Hello, Smeltzer! You here? You did n't get off to Chicago."

"No," said Smeltzer curtly, starting back across the gangway. Harcourt hurried on after Bess. They had walked but a little way when she said, in great perturbation, "Oh, I've left my umbrella. Can't we go back for it?"

They had reached the boat and he was stepping aboard, when he was arrested by the sound of Smeltzer's voice in altercation with the captain and the stewardess as they stood at the head of the gangway.

"Then she's on this boat," they heard him say.

"Did any woman get off at Detour?" asked the captain.

"Yis, sor. The wash-lady."

"Was there any child?"

"None that I seen."

"What was in that clothes-basket?" demanded Smeltzer, with sudden suspicion.

"Not a thing but me table-linen, sor, and that's the Lord's truth ef I was to die fur it!" said the woman whose heart it would "rej'ice to lie to a vilyan like that."

"Come on," said Harcourt, drawing Bess back, "we'd better get out of this. You and I can't compete with *her*. We are not in her class! I 'll buy you an umbrella if you need it."

Of course they stopped at the locks the first thing. Everybody does. It was while they were standing there

that he said in a low voice, "Look over to the other side. That 's Smeltzer, rushing post-haste for the station—and the train has just gone."

"Oh, has it?"

"Yes. And there is n't another till morning. I have just enquired. That will give her twelve or fifteen hours the start."

"She can't get off the island to-night, can she?"

"No, but she won't lose much time in the morning, I 'll wager."

It is a most fascinating occupation—watching the locks at the "Soo." There is always the temptation to stay for one more performance,—and they come thick and fast on this famous ship canal. They stayed till the throes of hunger sent them across the park to the hotel. She stood beside him as he registered, but when he caught her eye and laughed afterwards she did not respond very heartily.

'Being on the water has made me awfully sleepy," she said at the dinner table. "I think I shall write a letter to grandma and go to bed."

"You will get there as soon as the letter will."

"No. If it goes down in the morning it will get there by noon. That will be some help."

"It is moonlight," he pleaded. "Let's go over to the locks for an hour or so."

"No, I 'm sleepy. I 'm going to bed."

It was easy to see that he had in some way offended her.

He went out alone after she had gone to her room and walked up and down the sidewalk between the park and the locks. The place was most beautiful by moonlight, but he was not thinking much about its beauty or its wonders. His mind was dwelling on the strange-

ness of their position, on Bess's sweet childish womanliness, but most of all on Margaret and what she would do next. How glad he would be if he were only able to dispel the shadow that had fallen upon her.

The next morning as they stood beside the locks where they had agreed to stay until the boat went, Bess asked abruptly,

"Why did you write our names on the hotel register 'John Harcourt and sister?' I did n't like that very well, because—it seemed as if I—as if we—had done something you were ashamed of." Her lips were in a pretty childish pout.

He placed his hand on his heart with a gesture of exaggerated sentiment. "I did that because I wanted to make sure of your bearing my name at least once in your life. You know you told me the other day you intended to be an old maid, so this was the only way."

"Silly!" she said, blushing and looking away.

When they got back to Mackinac that night Bess found a room bearing evidence of hasty packing and a letter from her grandmother.

"My dear child," it said, "I am going to leave you for a little while. Margaret needs me now far more than you do, and I cannot be with both. Of course you got her letter and know what she did and why. When she came in last night you could have knocked me down with a feather. I certainly hope the Lord will reward that girl according to her works —and Smeltzer too. Of course we will have to go away at once. We shall be starting somewhere within an hour—where I do not know. We will go where the Lord directs, and stop when he tells us to. As soon as I know anything further I will let you know it. In the

meantime you must stay just where you are until you hear. Have everything packed and ready to go at a moment's notice, though I think I shall write instead of telegraphing.

"Say good-by to Mr. Harcourt for me and tell him I sincerely hope that we may meet again some time. Ask him to go over to Mackinaw City with you when I write for you to come, and see about your trunks. By the way, we leave ours for you to bring. It would be easier to track us if we had to check."

"Look here," said Harcourt, when he had got this far in the letter—she had brought it directly down to him, and they were reading it in the parlor—"do you suppose she expects to shake me like this?"

"Well, anyway," said Bess, "I am glad I am not entirely alone."

The letter ended, "May God bless you my child, and keep you safe from all harm, is the prayer of your devoted grandmother."

There was a yearning note in the closing sentence that was at variance with the confident tone of the earlier part. In truth, Mrs. Pennybacker had been torn between loyalty to Margaret and love for Bess.

"Well," said John Harcourt as he handed the letter back to her,—he really looked more cheerful than Bess felt—there 's nothing to do but to make the best of a bad situation. Suppose we take a walk up to the fort in the morning and talk it over."

They had time to talk that and many other things over in the three days that elapsed before the letter came. Harcourt felt it his duty to amuse and interest her during what was a trying period of waiting, and was unremitting in his attentions.

The letter came at last. She read it on the porch and handed it to him. It had got to the point now where she gave him her full confidence. It ran:

"South Haven, Mich., Sept. —, 1895.

"Dear Bess:

"At last we are settled, and I embrace the first opportunity to write, for I fear you have been consumed with anxiety." ("And I have been," said Bess when he looked at her out of the tail of his eye, "but I did n't think it was necessary to cry my eyes out!")

"Well, to begin at the beginning,—we started on the first boat that left the Island for Mackinaw City,—a very few minutes after my letter to you was finished, and were soon on the cars headed south. We only went as far as Petoskey, however, for I remembered that there we could take the Pere Marquette directly to Chicago, which would save time. We bought tickets to that point, being uncertain about our plans, and thinking that we might consider it best to go straight on to Missouri. But you know I told you we should go where the Lord directed us and stop when he said so. Well, just before we reached Grand Junction, a little station where a branch of the Michigan Central crosses the Pere Marquette, I heard some people behind me talking about South Haven—what a nice place it was, but how it was almost deserted now. I thought to myself that a deserted place was about the kind we wanted, so I asked them some questions about how to get there and found that we were right at the place where a decision must be made, for we would have to take the other road at Grand Junction. I went to Margaret and told her it seemed to me the Lord said stop, and she agreed with me. Then we began to hustle. If we had had our trunks we never could have done

it, for we had only about three minutes. But when the train stopped at Grand Junction we stepped off and let it go on to Chicago without us. This was blind number one. We figured that if that man should try to trace the two women that bought tickets in Petoskey he would be likely to follow them to Chicago, and there he would lose the scent.

"South Haven is directly west of Grand Junction, and Kalamazoo, the other end of this little branch road, is directly east. We bought two tickets to Kalamazoo, making a good many inquiries of the agent about the railroad connections there to different points."

("That's funny," said Bess, "if they were going to South Haven."

"Not at all," returned Harcourt, "that was blind number two. Now you will find that they discarded those tickets and boarded the train for the west."

"Yes, sir! that's just what they did," she said, looking ahead. "Was n't that cute in grandma?")

"Well," the letter proceeded, "having put him on a wrong trail if the thing were ever inquired into, we went out on the platform and waited for the west-bound train. There were a lot of people waiting who called themselves 'Saints' and had been off for some camp-meeting. That made it easier for us to lose ourselves. The train came along in a little while and we got on, intimating to the conductor that we had n't time to procure tickets, and paying our fare to South Haven."

("Look here," said Harcourt, "this thing is catching. If she keeps on there 'll be another one in Miss Brannigan's class!")

"We are now comfortably established at a boarding house called The Oakland, where they have a queer little dining-room in the basement and the best brown bread

you ever put in your mouth. We think we shall settle down here for several weeks. I don't like the idea of going back to Missouri just now for that man would be sure to follow us there. (There are some objections to being named Pennybacker instead of Smith.) I want you to come on immediately." Then followed a page or more of minute directions as to route, bills, etc.

"I don't know whether I'll have money enough for all that," said Bess, wrinkling her brow for the first time in her life over the financial problem.

"I'll lend it to you if you have n't"

"How could I get it back to you?"

"That's so! . . I guess I'll have to go down with you and collect it myself."

"Really?" cried Bess.

"Sure! Your grandmother left you in my care and I'm not going to prove recreant to a trust at this late day. Besides, I've got three more weeks to put in somewhere before I can go back to Washington. I guess South Haven will do as well as anywhere else. Don't you want me to go?"

"Why, yes. I 'd love to have you go. I don't know anything about attending to trunks. I almost know I could n't manage three."

A postscript to this letter said, "I have written at length about that Grand Junction business because I thought Mr. Harcourt would feel interested in hearing about it, and we will not see him again."

"And that 's where she 's going to fool herself," he said with a grin.

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE TOILS

SEPTEMBER was almost over. Golden-rod and wild asters fringed the low banks of Black River now, and the cardinal flower bent its stately head to peer suspiciously into the still waters, seeing there a line of red so vivid that it might well pass for a rival. The grapevines in their late luxuriance ran riot, climbing over the underbrush that grew down to the river's brink and pushing out across old trees that had been undermined and lay half buried, a menace to the boatman, but a joy—with all this greenery over them—to a nature-loving eye. Here and there a sumach, blood-red, threw in a needed touch of color, or a maple lifted a flaming branch.

They were much upon the river in these days. It was pleasant to get away from the people, though there were not many left. South Haven was very quiet; the boatmen were laying up their boats preparatory to the winter's painting. The crowds were gone. The steamers had taken back to the great city across the lake regretful loads of summer visitors who could not tarry to see the river in its autumn glory. This was hard for those who went, but very pleasant for those who stayed. They had plenty of room and nothing to mar the tranquil quiet of the place. It seemed to Margaret as they rowed through the shadows of the overhanging boughs that the very spirit of Peace was brooding over it all. She

almost forgot that there was such a man as Richard De Jarnette living to cast a shadow over her path. Perhaps she would never cross it again.

They always took the same places in the boat—Harcourt rowing, Margaret in the bow, and Bess and Philip in the stern to steer. Mrs. Pennybacker would seldom go. This left her to herself and brought Harcourt face to face with Bess. The girl was wonderfully pretty, with the freshness of a swaying anemone, but he used to wonder sometimes why Margaret never steered now as she did at first.

There was a woman's reason—perhaps rather a woman's intuition—back of it. She and he had been sitting one evening on the sands watching the sun go down, while Bess and Philip wandered up the beach looking for lucky stones. It was a gorgeous sunset. Such an orgy of color as flamed in the sky befitted the ceremonious passing of a king. It seemed as if all the pigments Nature's palette held had been laid upon the canvas, and—endowed with life—were there struggling for mastery. Even to the zenith and beyond the heavens were aglow. Nor was it all overhead. A band of gold stretched across the broad expanse from the sun's disk to the lapping waves at their feet, and on each side the shimmering opalescent waters reflected back the changing tints above. The little fruit boat on its daily trip back from Glen Pier was crossing the golden shaft now, and its smoke line stood out against the yellow sky. It gave the needed touch of life to complete the picture.

They sat in silence. It was not a time for words. Margaret, susceptible to the influence of color as many persons are to that of music, was watching it with a joy that was almost pain.

As they looked the yellow tints merged into the blue

of the robin's egg, pinks melted into lilacs and the high lights paled.

"Oh, let us go!" she said. "Let us go before it fades! I want to carry it with me forever. I cannot see it put on the dust and ashes of defeat! It always makes me think then of a life from which the coloring has gone out!"

He caught her by the hand. He too was stirred to the depths.

"Margaret, don't go!" There was a note in his voice that she had never heard there before—that it hurt her to hear now. "It is not always over when the sun goes down. Sometimes the later glory is beyond that of the first. Wait! Wait for the after glow!"

She drew her hand away, saying quickly, "I must go to Philip."

He did not try to detain her, nor did she see him again till the next morning, when he was in his usual mood of hilarity.

In thinking about it afterwards she felt sure that he had had no thought of anything but the sunset—no thought of what she had said about gray lives—but still the next day when they took their places in the boat, she had stepped into the bow, leaving the steering to Bess, who made a pretty picture with Philip beside her grasping with both chubby hands the steering rope as children hold the lines. He felt that it was his right to steer for he had now donned masculine attire, thanks to Mrs. Pennybacker, Divested of his restraining garments he was having a blissful time these days with his mud turtles down at Donahue's dock, his mother watching him, or over at the life-saving station, his hand held close in hers. Never for one moment was he out of her sight.

She was growing to love the place as much as Philip

did. From her seat in the bow, her eyes resting upon the child, and the pleasant, healthful nonsense of the young people falling lightly on her ears, Margaret was beginning to put the past behind her and to live in the present. Perhaps it was the conviction, growing stronger as the weeks went by, that they had eluded Smeltzer,—perhaps that the needed companionship of youth was working a cure,—or it may have been only that here she was so close to Nature as to hold communion with her visible forms and that gradually the old mother had

> "glided
> Into her darker musings, with a mild
> And healing sympathy, that stole away
> Their sharpness, ere she was aware."

One day they had gone up to Cold Spring in the "Phylidy," as the captain called his launch, with the intention of going on up the North Branch. Mrs. Pennybacker was with them this time. They were out for an all day's jaunt and were to have dinner in the woods.

They secured a large boat at Cold Spring, piled their hampers and hammocks in and started off in high spirits, Mrs. Pennybacker's trenchant comments on all they encountered making fun for the company.

Margaret from her post in the bow looked back upon the track they made as they turned into the North Branch. The place stood out ever afterward in her memory,—the lily pads at the river's fork, and the towering elms on the south shore; in the distance the sloping grounds of the hotel they had left behind, with the drooping willow over the spring; just before her as she looked back the railroad bridge across the South Branch and two lovers in a row boat gliding under it into the shadows

beyond. It was such a tranquil scene. It took her out into the clear sunlight.

It stood out in John Harcourt's memory, too, for it was just here that she had said only two days before when he had taken her alone for a row,

"Some day you will find a sweet woodland flower that has never been trampled on. Plant it in your garden. And then tend it. Oh, tend it carefully! It will not need much to make it grow—only the sunshine and a little care, a little tender handling, a little shielding from the blast or from the heat. No, it will not take much. Only—let it be constant! It is neglect that kills a plant—the doing for it to-day and forgetting it to-morrow." It was as near as she had ever come to a confidence about her own married life.

One "winds about and in and out" on the North Branch. There are many, many turns, particularly as one gets farther up. They were rounding one of these points when Margaret, still looking back over their tortuous track, saw a boat in the distance. It was only for a moment and then another bend took it from view. In it were two men. She could not help feeling disturbed though she said nothing. She would not be constantly obtruding her specter upon others. But she found herself watching for the boat at every turn. Sometimes she could see only a white hat against the green of the bank.

They rowed on and on. They were going to the head of navigation, Harcourt said, and there was all day to do it in. All the pay he claimed was his dinner, but by the time he got this "floating scow of old Virginny" to a landing place he rather thought he should need it. And he rested on his oars.

"Mr. Harcourt," said Margaret in a low tone, "have

you noticed those men—in the boat, I mean. They 've stopped now. They always slow up when you do."

The shadow was upon her again.

"I 've noticed them," he replied quietly. "They are probably coming up here to fish. They say there are bass in the North Branch." But he took up his oars.

They landed at last and climbed up the bank, the ladies going toward the woods to find a place for hammocks and the dinner for which Philip was clamoring. Harcourt stayed behind to make his "scow" fast. He had hardly done so when the other boat pulled around the bend and drew up beside him. There were two men in it; one was the light-house keeper—the other Smeltzer.

"Hello, Smeltzer!" was Harcourt's off-hand greeting as the other sprang out of the boat and stood confronting him. He spoke with a jaunty good fellowship that he was far from feeling. The women were out of sight, but his strained ear could detect sounds coming from their direction. He knew that Philip was likely to appear at any moment on the bank above them. "You after bass too?"

He rather ostentatiously displayed his fishing tackle.

Smeltzer came directly to the point.

"No, sir, I 'm not after bass to-day unless you might call it calico bass. I 'm after the woman you 've been spiriting around the country. I guess she 'll not give me the slip this time."

"My good man," said Harcourt, a little haughtily, "I think you are suffering under a misapprehension. We are innocent tourists out for a picnic."

"You 'll get your picnic all right, before you get through, but you may not be able to run it to suit you. Where is she? You may as well stand aside now, Mr. Harcourt. I mean business."

At this moment the thing that Harcourt had been fearing happened. Philip appeared on the bank just beyond them. Harcourt motioned him back with a quick gesture, but in the meantime Mr. Smeltzer had sprung nimbly up the bank and was close behind the frightened child. Harcourt and the man who had done the rowing followed. When they reached the spot that had been selected for the picnic, the terror-stricken women were huddled together and Margaret had Philip in her arms. Smeltzer was explaining his business.

"I am sorry to interrupt this party, ladies, but I have an order here authorizing me to take Mrs. De Jarnette and child into custody and bring them to the City of Washington, D. C."

"An order from whom?" demanded Margaret.

"From the guardian of this child, Mr. Richard De Jarnette."

"You may go back to Mr. Richard De Jarnette and tell him that I do not acknowledge his right to control either me or my child. I refuse to go."

When Mr. Smeltzer replied to this it was in a tone so reasonable and conciliatory and withal so earnest that it alarmed Mrs. Pennybacker more than bluster would have done.

"I hope you will not persist in that decision, Mrs. De Jarnette. It will be far better for you in the end to go back peaceably with me. Mr. De Jarnette has had men on the search for this child for nearly five years. You can depend upon it that he will not give him up now that he is found. But—it may be that when you see him and talk it over with him you may be able to come to some sort of a compromise about it."

"See here, Smeltzer," said Harcourt, "you can't bulldoze us in any such way as this! You have n't the power to take Mrs. De Jarnette or her child back to

Washington on an order from any private individual, and you know it. If you propose to arrest her you 'll have to show a warrant for it. Is n't that right, Captain?"

"That 's right, sir," replied the captain, who was an interested spectator.

"I have n't said anything about arresting her, have I?" demanded Smeltzer. "I am trying to persuade her to go peaceably without any such humiliation."

"You may as well give it up," she said, "for I shall never go."

"I hope you will think better of that, Mrs. De Jarnette. Because—" he was drawing from his pocket a yellow envelope marked 'Western Union Telegraph'—"if you don't it will force upon me a very painful duty."

He took a dispatch from the envelope and unfolded it slowly. "I located you last night—saw you first as you and the child were coming down from the light-house." They had been there as they had often gone before to see the light-house keeper light the big lantern. The captain was very fond of the child. "I followed you and found out where you were staying. Then I wired Mr. De Jarnette for instructions. Here they are."

He handed her the dispatch and they gathered around her to read. It said:

"Bring her back peaceably if possible. If she refuses to come, swear out a warrant for her arrest on charge of kidnapping.

"De Jarnette."

"You see," said the man, quietly, "I am given no discretion in the matter. If you refuse to go with me I *must* swear out this warrant—and then—"

"Then what?" asked Margaret with white lips.

"When once this prosecution is begun even Mr. De Jarnette cannot stop it. It will then be out of his hands and the law will have to take its course."

Margaret drew a quick sharp breath. "If I could only talk with Judge Kirtley!"

"Why can't you telegraph him?" suggested Mrs. Pennybacker. Then, turning to the detective, "You would, of course, allow her to do that?"

"Certainly. I will wait any reasonable length of time or do anything you suggest that will further the peaceful settlement of this case. In the meantime, I shall have to keep her in sight."

As they were preparing to take to the boats the captain came up to Margaret.

"I just want to say to you, madam," he said, wrathfully, "that if I had known what that cuss was up to he —he would n't have got *me* to row him." Then raising his voice a little to insure its carrying as far as the detective, "I lost a leg, madam, fighting men. But I 've never got down yet to hunting women and children!"

"Oh, Captain, I know you would n't have done anything to harm him if you had known. You have always been so good to Philip."

"Mama," said Philip, anxiously, as they packed the baskets for their return, "can't we eat the picnic on the way home?"

It was a sad and thoughtful little party that rowed slowly back, the detective discreetly following in his own boat. For Margaret, at the first appearance of Smeltzer, there had been a moment of absolute terror. That had now given place to dull despondency; and the anguish in her eyes was piteous to see.

Mrs. Pennybacker from the first counseled returning to Washington with Smeltzer. "If that man

has been hunting you for four years and a half, he will not give the thing up now that you are found—the detective is undoubtedly right about that. But it may be as he says that you can make terms with Mr. De Jarnette when you see him."

"Oh, I can't. I know I can't," said Margaret.

"There is no telling where a determined man will stop," Harcourt said. "And—Smeltzer is not going to lose you again." Then they fell to wording the telegram.

When the party reached Donohue's dock Mr. Smeltzer followed them at a respectful distance up the street to the Oakland.

"You will excuse my going with you to your boarding-house," he said to Harcourt, who dropped behind to ask him some question. "I stayed there last night."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir, I did! You would n't suppose I would risk another Detour slip, would you?"

"Say! I want to find out some time how you found us."

"All right. After we get up to the Oakland I 'll tell you."

It was several hours after the telegram was sent to Judge Kirtley before his answer was received. Much of the time was spent in earnest consultation in Miss Crosby's little parlor—and a part of it by Margaret in throes of anguish upstairs as she made plan after plan only to be brought up always at the last by the impossibility of eluding Smeltzer. A poignant recollection of Mammy Cely's "beating her head ag'in' a stone wall" rose before her. That was what she was doing. . . Whichever way she turned there was the stone wall! . . What must she do? What could she do? . . Nothing. She was powerless. Richard De Jarnette had run her to

earth at last. . . She clenched her hands in impotent rage until the nails sank into the delicate flesh.

"If she goes," John Harcourt was saying to Mrs. Pennybacker downstairs, "I shall go with her." Bess looked startled. "It is time I am getting back anyway. . . . Oh, yes, I hope she will consent to go. It would n't do for her to risk prosecution on a criminal charge at the hands of a man like that."

"That is exactly the way I feel about it. I think I will go up and talk with her again."

Harcourt sauntered out doors to where Smeltzer quietly stood on guard. "Now, then," he said.

"I can't say that this affair redounds much to my glory," Smeltzer began, half quizzically, "except that I 've got her. But—"

"The thing that I don't understand is why if you were going to find us at all you did n't do it sooner."

"The old lady threw me off the track, that 's why! But we may as well begin at the beginning. I had never connected you with my game till I saw you here. I suppose now you are the one that got her off at Detour."

"You do me too much honor, Smeltzer. My will was good, but my wits were lacking. You may lay that to the charge of Miss Norah Brannigan, of the *John A. Paxton*."

"Aha! I mistrusted that she had a hand in it anyway. But can't she lie?" He seemed lost in admiration of Norah's talents.

"Go on with your tale. We can all lie when occasion calls for it. You are not an infant at it yourself."

"Well," grinned Smeltzer, "I found at the Soo that the lady had given me the slip. I went through that boat from top to bottom—the stewardess giving me all the help

in her power, and assuring me she had n't seen any such people on board. Then I made for the depot."

"I saw you. You made good time, Smeltzer."

"Yes. . . Well, when I found the train gone I sat down and figured it out. She had a good long start, but I knew she could n't leave the Island till morning and I would take the first train down myself. I telegraphed the ticket agents of the G. R. and I. and the *Pere Marquette* at Petoskey to be on the lookout for these parties (description following) and note their destination. The *Pere Marquette* man identified them all right and said he sold them tickets for Chicago. I took the next train for that blooming metropolis, telegraphing ahead for another man to be there when they got off, and hold them. Well, sir, when I reached Chicago and heard report, no such parties had got off! Well, sir, I fooled away a day or two in Chicago. Then all at once it came to me that we had crossed a railroad away back there somewhere and I could n't get it out of my mind. You know men in my business get into the habit of noticing pretty closely."

"I've observed it!"

"I made some inquiries and went back to Grand Junction. Agent remembered the parties perfectly—had had a good deal of talk with the old lady about roads out of Kalamazoo,—had to show 'em to her on the map."

"Yes. She 's from Missouri."

"I took the next train for Kalamazoo, perfectly dead sure I was on their track. I monkeyed around there one week. Nice place. But I tell you I did n't enjoy it! I got a lot of clues there from hackmen and gatemen that were sure they had seen these people, but a pile of good they did me! You see I was so sure they were in Kalamazoo that I made that sort of headquarters and

when I had exhausted one lead would go back there to take up another. Well, finally, I made up my mind that I would go back over this little South Haven road and take the boat for Chicago. I got here about half-past four yesterday and while idling away the time at the life-saving station, before the boat left, who should I see across the river but the woman and child I had been scouring the country for!"

"Fool luck!" said Harcourt. "Nothing short of it. I wonder if that is n't the way a lot of you fellows rise to eminence in your profession."

"Say—do you think she is going back without that warrant?"

"Can't tell. I hope so. I think it will depend somewhat on the telegram. And there it comes now."

Mrs. Pennybacker was at the door to receive it. She had been watching for it behind the curtains, and called to Margaret that it had come. They read it on the porch. Smeltzer, with a delicacy that they hardly expected from him, had turned his back upon them and appeared absorbed in the view of the lake.

The telegram ran:

"Come peaceably by all means. Will try to arrange matters.

"KIRTLEY."

"Tell him I will go," said Margaret, in a voice of despair. She had promised Mrs. Pennybacker that the telegram should decide it.

Mr. Harcourt returned in a moment to say that Mr. Smeltzer would be glad to go by the late afternoon train if they could be ready.

"H-m," said Mrs. Pennybacker, reflectively. "That

won't give us much time. Bess, can you be ready? I told you not to unpack all those things!"

"Are we going too?" cried Bess in ecstasy. "To Washington?" Then catching the child's face between her hands and giving a swift sidelong glance beyond, "Oh, Philip Second, son of Margaret, won't—that—be—fine!"

She punctuated the sentence upon the rosy lips but Philip brushed the marks aside, considering such demonstration decidedly beneath a boy.

"Aunt Mary?"

To the mute questioning of Margaret's sorrowful face Mrs. Pennybacker replied by taking the girl into her motherly arms and saying with an odd mixture of Scripture phraseology and Pennybacker pluck, "Yes, child! It is 'Whither thou goest, I will go,' from this time on, if you want me. I'm going to see this thing through! 'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'"

"I have no God!" cried Margaret, passionately,—then fell to weeping on her old friend's neck.

CHAPTER XXII

AT BAY

UNFORTUNATELY, matters were not so easily arranged in Washington as Judge Kirtley had intimated in his telegram they might be. After learning of the situation, Mrs. Pennybacker had a strong suspicion that the dispatch was intentionally optimistic. Nor was she far wrong. Judge Kirtley was convinced from his knowledge of Mr. De Jarnette that his object was not to bring punishment upon his sister-in-law, but to get the child. He was equally convinced, however, that when Mr. De Jarnette found her blocking the way to the accomplishment of his purpose she would be swept aside regardless of the consequences to herself. He was, therefore, exceedingly anxious to avoid the possibility of her forcing his hand.

It was found when the party reached Washington that Richard De Jarnette was inexorable. And as Judge Kirtley explained to Margaret, the child was now of such age that his guardian could reasonably claim to be able to care for him, as he could not have done for an infant. The situation was grave.

They had gone directly to the Massachusetts Avenue house, which had been closed since Margaret's flight except for the periodical visits of a caretaker. It had been Mrs. Kirtley's task to see that it was ready for the sorrowful home-coming.

"No, I am not going to Maria's," Mrs. Pennybacker had told Bess. "Margaret needs us. And besides, Maria always rubs my fur the wrong way, and just now I want it to lie straight."

Several days elapsed after their return before Margaret saw anything of Richard De Jarnette. When she did he came to make a formal demand for the child.

She refused absolutely to give him up.

In thinking of that interview when he was gone she felt depressingly aware that she had done her cause no good, for she had said many bitter intemperate things, being under great provocation. To them all he listened without reply until she had spent herself. Then he said,

"My dead brother's will gave me this child. I accept it as a sacred trust. The courts have sustained that will and my claim. I shall have the child. I beg that you will not deceive yourself, nor let any one else deceive you into thinking that my determination is subject to change."

"You will never get him," she said, "unless you tear him by force from my arms!"

He bowed gravely then and left her.

The next day an officer appeared at the Massachusetts Avenue house with a paper to serve upon Mrs. De Jarnette.

Habeas corpus proceedings had been instituted in the District Supreme Court by Richard De Jarnette to recover the custody of his ward, Philip Varnum De Jarnette. Margaret Varnum De Jarnette, the mother of the child, was named as respondent in the suit. The paper was an order duly signed requiring the respondent to show cause October twelfth at 10 a. m. why writ of habeas corpus should not be issued.

October twelfth was one week away.

THE court-room was crowded to its utmost capacity when the De Jarnette case was called. A contest for the custody of a child rarely fails to excite interest, and in this case it was greatly enhanced by the social position and financial standing of the litigants. Besides this, the case had attracted much attention because of the legal points involved.

The daily papers had done their best to prepare the public for this trial. The account of the finding of the child after years of search had been given in full (with one notable exception) from the Smeltzer point of view. The details of the sensational will case were revived and the kidnapping by the mother on the night following the decision which awarded her child to the guardian under the will. The accident by which Victor De Jarnette lost his life was recalled and related with much circumstantiality and some enlargement. It was all discussed in many a household in Washington during the week preceding the trial, and it brought to the court-room a good attendance that day. Women were there in unusual numbers, drawn thither by their sympathies as well as their curiosity. John Harcourt, looking back of him, thought he had never seen so many there before.

Margaret, accompanied by Mrs. Pennybacker, Bess and Mrs. Kirtley, sat beside the old Judge,—Mr. De Jarnette by his counsel. This by a chance brought the two who were fighting for the child side by side, while Philip, in childish ignorance of what it all meant, sat between them. Of course nothing had been said to him about the case, and the arguments of counsel threw no enlightenment upon the matter to him.

But there was one book that Philip had learned to read if he did not know anything about the weighty volumes

they were quoting from, and that was his mother's face. He saw from it now that something was wrong, and climbing up into her lap, he took her cheeks between his chubby hands and kissed her gravely on lips and eyes. Then, satisfied at the faint smile his caress evoked, he slid down to the floor, placed his chair close to hers, and laid his head against her shoulder. The little byplay was not lost on those in the vicinity, and the clerk, looking up just then, wondered what it could be that he had lost. The women spectators and some of the men were wiping their eyes.

There had been a fearful strain upon Margaret in these last few days,—the journey, the suspense, the constantly-growing fear of how it would terminate were almost more than she could stand up against. She had a strange sudden sense of unreality. She looked around to see if it were really she. Then by one of those quick reversions that the mind sometimes makes, it seemed to her that she had been in precisely this place once before, not in that other trial, but in one just like this, that Mrs. Pennybacker sat beside her then as now, that Philip leaned against her thus, and that a man was saying this identical thing. She looked around at the court officers half dazed.

As the trial proceeded she lost hope, Mr. De Jarnette's attorney was making out such a clear case. But when Judge Kirtley spoke it did not seem that there was room for doubt as to how it would go. She *must* get the child. He closed with a powerful plea for a mother's supreme right.

After the closing of the arguments the Judge spoke:

"The question to be determined," he said, "is not one of sentiment, but of law. Briefly stated it is this: Whether the statute of Charles II, Chapter 24, Section 8, is in force in this District to the extent that the father of infant chil-

dren may be deed or will transfer their exclusive custody and control to a guardian, regardless of the fact that the mother, his wife, may be competent, willing, and in all respects qualified to maintain, educate, and train them properly.

"There has been, both in and out of court, a good deal of sentimental declamation indulged in, in regard to this statute, and it has been reprobated as being in conflict with the natural rights of the mother, and in conflict with the present civilization of the people. But while it is sufficient to say that courts of justice, and especially of common law, are not at liberty to disregard the statute and act upon any mere feeling of repugnance to it, we must bear in mind that this statute of Charles II has been in force in England for more than two centuries, and that it is still in force there, and has stood the test of English civilization, with the slight modification," he went on to explain, "that the chancellor or master of the rolls may, upon petition of the mother, where the infant is within the age of seven years, order that such infant shall be delivered to and remain in the custody of the mother until attaining the age of seven; provided the mother be a fit and proper person to have the custody of the infant.

"There may be reasons," he continued, "why the wife should not be selected as the guardian of the child. In the first place the father, as the head of the family and the responsible one has the right to say who should have the training of his children.

Mrs. Pennybacker's eyes snapped.

"Who gave him that right?" she asked in a fierce whisper of Bess, who was the nearest at hand, but Bess, not knowing the answer, could only look blank.

The Judge went on to say that another reason was the probability of a second marriage and the consequent in-

troduction of his child to the treatment of a stranger, possibly hard and unsympathetic. ("Of course *men* seldom marry," commented Mrs. Pennybacker satirically.)

"And yet another reason might be in the age or ill health, to say nothing of the mental or moral unfitness of the mother." He proceeded to emphasize just here that while no stress had been laid upon the mother's unfitness in the present case on account of mental or moral incompetency, it had been clearly shown by counsel for the plaintiff that she was guilty of wilfully and forcibly kidnapping and abducting said child after the will devising it to the said De Jarnette had been admitted to probate, and while it might be argued that this was an unwitting violation of the law, still it must be admitted that the act showed the defendant to be deficient in that sound judgment which would make her a safe guardian for the child.

Margaret sat looking at him with wild startled eyes.

"Like all powers of appointment," he continued, "this power in the father to appoint by testament a guardian to his children is liable sometimes to be exercised in what might appear to be an arbitrary manner, and in disregard of the feelings of the mother. But the history of the statute does not show this to have been frequently the case in reality. Many times the act has a most beneficent operation. The principle of the statute, taking it all in all, appears to have been beneficial to the family relation, and to have furnished the means of securing the welfare of the children, which after all is the thing that the court has always to consider. If not so, it could hardly have been retained in force in the English and American statute law to the present day."

Concluding, he said:

"In 1873 this subject was fully discussed before the

Court of Queen's Bench. It was held that a person who had been duly appointed under Charles II, Chap. 24, Sec. 8, by the will of the father to be guardian of his child, stands in *loco parentis,* and having, therefore, a legal right to the custody of the infant, may in order to obtain possession of such ward, claim a writ of *habeas corpus* which a common law court has no discretion to refuse, if the applicant be a fit person and the child too young to choose for itself.

"The court, therefore, gives the custody of the child to the guardian under the will, and counsel may draw a decree in accordance with the decision of the court."

For a full half minute there was silence in the court-room. Then, before Judge Kirtley could speak or put out a hand to stop her, Margaret De Jarnette stood up, white as the dead.

"The decision may be according to the law," she said in a low tense voice—"the law made by men for men. But it will not stand. Mark that!" her head was thrown back now and her eyes blazed. "For it is against Nature's law and that is God's very own. This child is mine! I bore him—through pain of body and anguish of soul. Does that give me no claim upon him?"

She stretched out her hands in an unconscious gesture of appeal. A silence like that of the grave was over the room. Men and women bent forward and held their breath in their eagerness to hear. The Judge did not stop her. The Probate Court is very patient with women.

"And that is not all," she went on. "Oh, no! *no!* that is not all. Through all those weary months—days of pain and sleepless nights—he lay, part of my body, his very life entwined with mine, his very soul fashioned by mine, his being absolutely dependent upon mine—he lay there, I say, close to my heart—*and every throb was for him!* You tell me that the man who gave him only life and a

name and then deserted him—" the words were pouring out tumultuously now—"that this man has the right to will that child away from me, his mother, as he would his horse or his dog? I tell you it is a lie! *a lie!* He has no such right! The child is mine! There is no power in earth or heaven or hell that can take him from me! *I 'll have him!*"

She stopped. The world grew black before her. She swayed backward; there was a sudden stir; and it was Richard De Jarnette springing forward that caught her as she fell.

CHAPTER XXIII

MOTHERS AND FOSTER MOTHERS

FROM the court-room she was carried straight to the hospital. The doctor, summoned hastily to attend her, told them gravely that it was probably the beginning of an attack of brain fever. There was never any telling where that would end. The strain of the last week had been very severe. She should have the most skilful and experienced nursing that could be secured, and constant medical attention.

Then, too, as Judge Kirtley hurriedly explained to Mrs. Pennybacker, who, having some confidence in her own ability as a nurse and a country woman's distrust of hospitals, had urged Margaret's removal to her own home, at the hospital she would be spared the further strain of seeing the child taken away. It would be hard for her to come back to a house without him, but not such an ordeal as his forcible removal would be. After this Mrs. Pennybacker said no more.

With Judge Kirtley she herself had taken Margaret to the hospital, the girl still mercifully oblivious to all around her. Then she had returned to Massachusetts Avenue to get Philip ready for his removal to Elmhurst. Life seemed to be moving on pretty rapidly just now.

When she reached the house the child was gone. Mr. De Jarnette had come for him almost immediately, Bess reported.

"Did he object to going?"

"No. I told him in Mr. De Jarnette's presence that his mama was sick and he was going to his Uncle Richard's for a little visit. I guess I emphasized visit, maybe. I think Margaret had prepared Philip for it. I heard her tell him last night that perhaps he would go to his Uncle Richard's for a while, and that he must be a brave little boy and not cry."

"I know. I think she lost courage last night. Perhaps she had a presentiment of how it was to be. I am glad she took that way of preparing the child. Did he cry?"

"No. But his chin quivered, the way it does, you know, when he tries to keep from crying."

"Poor little thing!"

"Grandma," said Bess, thoughtfully, "I don't believe Mr. De Jarnette is going to be unkind to Philip. He did n't say much, but he seemed to be looking out for him —asked if he had n't some favorite playthings that could be taken along. You would n't imagine his thinking of such a thing as that, would you? Is n't he a strange man?"

"Incomprehensible, to me. What did you give him?"

"His train of cars and the little red wagon. And Grandma! I gave Mr. De Jarnette that picture of Margaret and Philip together—the one, you know, that we call 'the Madonna.' That is the sweetest thing she ever had taken, with Philip's baby face pressed up against hers. I told him it might help Philip at night to have it to look at if he was homesick."

"Bess!"

"Yes'm, I did! I knew it would make him howl. I hope it will! Any way, I thought the picture would do Mr. De Jarnette good."

"Bess," said Mrs. Pennybacker, in a burst of grandmotherly admiration which she did not always display so openly, "for a young girl you certainly have a great deal of sense. I hope Philip won't be too brave. I'd like to see Mr. Richard De Jarnette with a homesick child on his hands. And if he does n't have one to-night I 'll miss my guess. *Bess!* There 's Maria—and that idiotic little poodle! . . Oh, dear! I did hope I should be spared that to-day."

Looking from the window Bess saw Mrs. Van Dorn alighting from her carriage, the footman holding what looked like a jet-black silky ball with dashes of pink about it. He deposited it carefully in his mistress's waiting arms.

"That 's Toddlekyns!" announced Mrs. Pennybacker. "I asked Maria the other day why she did n't give the thing a decent Christian dog's name. 'Toddlekyns' sounds to me like a weak attenuated cat."

Toddlekyns was in reality a very rare variety of Russian poodle, upon which Mrs. Van Dorn was just now lavishing the wealth of her unattached affections. Mrs. Pennybacker had found him on her return to the capital occupying so large a space in the center of the Van Dorn stage that her sense of proportion had been greatly outraged. She never passed him without wishing to administer a surreptitious kick that would send him into the wings.

The years had dealt kindly with Mrs. Van Dorn. Or perhaps it was that her emotions had been of that flabby kind that do not leave their impress on the face. She gave herself careful grooming. Once when she discovered an incipient line about the corner of her eye she straightened it out with court plaster over night, not sleeping much in consequence, and massaged it for two

hours the next morning, excusing herself from attending divine service by saying firmly, "A woman's first duty is to herself. I simply will *not* have wrinkles."

"I thought I must come right over and hear all about it," she exclaimed, sinking gracefully into an arm-chair and lifting Toddlekyns to her lap. "So the case went against her. I heard something about it from Mrs. Somerville. And she will really have to give him up! Too bad! Can I see her? I suppose she feels dreadfully just at first. . . At the hospital? You don't say so . . Brain fever? Why, they always die of that, don't they? . . Well, I feel very sorry for her, though I must say I sympathize with Richard too."

"On what account?" demanded Mrs. Pennybacker.

"Oh, because everybody is so down on him. It has almost broken off the intimacy between him and Dr. Semple, they say."

"Good for Dr. Semple!"

"Well—I don't know—I suppose I am broader-minded than some people. I can always see both sides."

"So can I when there are two sides. This case has but one."

"Well," said Mrs. Van Dorn, in an argumentative tone that was new to her, "anyway, I think it was very natural that Richard should want to carry out his brother's wishes. But," she cast her eyes down modestly and toyed with Toddlekyns' silky ears,—"would n't you almost think he would *have* to have somebody to help him—in bringing this child up?"

"Humph!" came from her aunt.

"He has Mammy Cely," said Bess, innocently.

"Oh, Mammy Cely—an old negro—yes. But anybody that has a child to rear would feel the need, I should think, of a sympathizing—well I don't care, *I* think if

Richard De Jarnette is really going to take Philip, he should look out for somebody to be a mother to him."

"And I think he had better let him stay with the mother the Lord gave him!" cried Bess, indignantly, with a flash of her grandmother's spirit.

Mrs. Pennybacker contented herself with looking keenly at her niece over her spectacles. There was something about the look that embarrassed Mrs. Van Dorn.

"I don't want you to think I don't sympathize with Margaret, Aunt Mary," she began. "It is n't that, at all. I feel awfully sorry for her. I know she will feel lonely at first. I thought about it at home—how lonely I should be if I should lose Toddlekyns—and I just made up my mind to let her have him for a few days—till the worst of it is over. I may yet, when she gets back from the hospital."

Mrs. Pennybacker shut her lips firmly together and shook her head.

"I would n't do it Maria," she said, hastily.

She moved over to the window and took up her knitting, leaving Mrs. Van Dorn to Bess's entertainment. It was hard for anything to hold her thoughts long today away from the child of her adoption. She had come back from the hospital sorely troubled about her and was falling back, from life-long habit, upon her inevitable resource when burdened—work. But as the knitting needles flew in her swift fingers, her thoughts were with Margaret and her fight against fate.

How would Margaret bear it now that the hope which had been a sheet anchor to her soul was gone? She had been very brave through it all, even in these last trying days but it had been in the confident belief that no court in the land would decree against her. With that prop gone upon what would she stay her soul? She recalled

the girl's passionate outburst in the court-room with apprehension. It was not like her to forget time and place and the proprieties like that. She thought of the doctor's words, "You never can tell how a thing like this will end." *She* knew that it ended sometimes in death—and sometimes in—

Mrs. Pennybacker did not finish it. She would not acknowledge even to herself the fear that was tugging at her heart. Margaret had been under a fearful mental strain. Would she be able to stand up against it? Would her physical vigor be such as to enable her to—She broke off again in her thoughts. She was thinking in fragments to-day. Suppose the next trial of the case—in whatever form it would come—should go against her too. Had she the strength of will, of character, to recast her life still another time and live it out without her child? She had been amazed at the buoyancy of the girl's nature which had enabled her to rise above her sorrows and thrust them beneath her feet. But then she had Philip! Now—

"Aunt Mary," said Mrs. Van Dorn, turning to her and breaking in upon these somber thoughts somewhat abruptly, "I must say that I was very much surprised at Margaret De Jarnette's conduct in the court-room to-day. Mrs. Somerville was telling me about it. Of course people are different, and I don't expect everybody to have my high standards, but it seems to me that her allusions were decidedly indelicate—not to say coarse. Mrs. Somerville says she was actually violent—*swore,* I should call it. Anyway she said 'hell' or 'damn' or some of those things that nobody ought ever to say but a man. Mrs. Somerville did n't seem to feel so, but I am surprised at Margaret. Such bad form! And before gentlemen too!"

Mrs. Pennybacker's needles clicked. She was knitting fast, and without much regard to stitches dropped. Those needles were her safety valves. Her lips just now indicated that steam was at high pressure. . . It was positively no use to talk to Maria!

"Of course it is hard for her to give up her child," Mrs. Van Dorn continued with the air of one willing to make every reasonable concesssion—"any woman can understand a mother's feelings—(come here, darling, let mama tie his little wibbons)—but to say 'hell'—"

"Maria!" Mrs. Pennybacker gave her yarn a jerk that sent the ball on one of its perennial journeys across the room—"if you will excuse my saying so, it is not very becoming in you to criticise Margaret De Jarnette just at this time. A woman who has never been anything more than *step-mother to a poodle* is not authority on maternal feelings!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MAN WHO WON

RICHARD DE JARNETTE sat alone in the library at Elmhurst—the home of his fathers for generations back. It was a gloomy room. The furniture and the hangings were dark and massive. Everything spoke of a bygone age and a lack of woman's touch. Faded moreen curtains hung over Venetian blinds and shut out God's glorious sunlight. Both had been new when Richard De Jarnette's mother was a bride. Nobody had ever thought it worth while to change them.

In the center of the room the claw-footed mahogany table was piled with books and papers. Mammy Cely kept the place beautifully clean, but she was forbidden to touch the table.

The very books on the shelves belonged to another century,—the English poets bound in sheep, Hume, Gibbon, Johnson's Dictionary—well worn, Josephus, D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation," and kindred sorts, and on the lower shelves Scott's Bible—in many ponderous tomes, and the "Comprehensive Commentary." On one shelf in the old-fashioned "secretary" were a few volumes that spoke a woman's taste at a time when women must not read the virile things their brothers found good food. Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Sigourney in blue and gold, a Flora's Album, the "Language of Flowers," and Gift Books and "Annuals" in resplendent bindings

that suggested the poverty within. These books had been Richard's mother's, and they looked cowed and overshadowed by the masculine array that lined the room. All the moneyed De Jarnettes had been planters, but with the reading habit, and there had been a preacher and a doctor in the family who, dying without issue, had bequeathed their libraries to the shelves of Elmhurst. The red cover of the book that Richard De Jarnette held in his hand seemed almost an impertinence among this staid, respectable assemblage in sheep and calf. It looked so new and fresh and modern.

But while it was all this, it was not holding him tonight. It would have taken more even than dear John Fiske to shut out from his ears the echo of this day's doings—fragments from the attorney's pleas, Mrs. Pennybacker's incisive whisper which reached his ear and lodged there, "Who gave him that right?"

He tried to throw it all aside. It was over now and he had won. The child was upstairs safe asleep. He was sick and tired of the subject. He would get his mind on something else It was for this that he had brought out "Virginia and her Neighbors." And he turned resolutely to the book.

But somehow the face of the woman he had defeated rose up between him and the printed page. He could not see the words for it. For one brief space he had held his vanquished enemy passive in his arms, her head against his breast. He could not rid himself of the sight of her face as she lay there.

He put the book down and threw his head back against the leather-covered chair. His eyes encountered those of his mother fixed upon him—his young mother whom he had never known. She looked down upon him from the portrait over the mantel. With the hateful perti-

nacity that the eyes in portraits sometimes show, they followed him whichever way he turned. They were very sad eyes. He had never liked to look at the portrait on that account. His mother had not been a happy woman. That he knew from Mammy Cely, and he would have guessed it, he had sometimes thought, from the character of the face that hung beside it. There was a sternness about the features of his father that did not promise much for a woman's happiness.

Richard De Jarnette was not an imaginative man, but there was something about his mother's eyes that in all these years he had never seen there—a questioning, reproachful look. They had never followed him about as they did to-night. He moved impatiently, half turning away from the portrait, and took up his book again. He read on resolutely, turning page after page with clock-like regularity. He would not give up to such folly!

Then all at once he perceived that what John Fiske was saying was, in a voice of anguish,

"The child is mine! I bore him!"

He shut the book. He could not evade the thing. And after all what was there to evade? He was right. The law had justified him in what he had done. And the courts knew less about the case than he did too,—that was another thing. He had not injured her reputation in any way. He had seen to that. The world would know her always as an injured wife. He was content that it should be so. It would know him as a hard-hearted unnatural monster. He knew that because a candid man had eased an over-wrought mind to-day by telling him so. Even Semple, his friend, his own familiar friend,—he winced now as one does when a bare nerve

is touched,—had avoided him as they left the court-house. Only those who have few friends could know how that cut.

Well, let the world think what it chose of him. He knew he was right. He could have justified himself before them all, but it would have been at her expense. That he did not choose to do. He had heeded his brother's dying request and spared her. Victor, in shielding her with his latest breath, had made what reparation he could for the wrong he had done her. It was left to him to administer justice. And why should he not? he asked himself with a sudden sense of bereavement. She had taken from him his best beloved. He had done no more by her. And he knew and she knew why he had done it. That was enough. Pity? No. Had she had pity?

Richard De Jarnette had the eyes of his mother, but his mouth, as it tightened now, looked singularly like that of the man in the portrait above him.

A knock broke in upon his perturbed thoughts and Mammy Cely's dark face appeared.

"Marse Richard,—"

"Well?" He was impatient at the interruption.

"—I reckon, sir, you got to come up sta'rs to that chile. I can't do nothin' with him."

"What's the matter with him? Is he sick?"

"He 's wuss 'n sick! He 's homesick."

"Can't you quiet him some way—by rocking him or something of that sort?" He had a vague idea that rocking was a panacea for all childish ills.

"Marse Richard, that chile done pass the cradle age. And look lak he don't crave nobody's lap but his ma's."

"Why don't you tell him stories? You know how to quiet a child."

"I done tole him all I know," said Mammy Cely,—which

was not at all the truth, for she had an unlimited supply and had purposely withheld them,—"but he don't seem to take no *in*trus. He's in that ongodly state of mind he don' keer *what* turnt the robin's breas' red! No, sir! He wants his ma!"

"Well, tell him he can't have her,—that she is sick and can't come."

"My Lord, Marse Richard! I done tole him that fifty times! But he don't accep' the pronouncement. He say he's bleeged to see his ma."

Mr. De Jarnette scowled.

"It is a strange thing to me that you can't quiet a five-year old child," he said, looking very straight at her.

Mammy Cely returned the look unflinchingly. Anybody that sought to overawe her had entered upon a large contract.

"Marse Richard, is you ever tried to pacify a homesick chile?"

"No, you know I have n't, but—"

"Well, sho 's you born, sir, 't aint no easy job."

"A child of five and a half is old enough to be reasoned with," he declared.

"Marse Richard, you can't reason homesickness out of a grown person, let alone a baby! I been discoursin' to him fur an hour on that tex' but he don't seem to sense the argyments. Maybe he would ef they was white, but he don't 'spond to the colored ones. No, sir! I done got to the end of my rope. I don't know what to do. Look lak he gwine cry hisself to death."

"He was all right this afternoon, was n't he?"

"Yes, sir, long as daylight lasted. He tuk right smart *in*trus helpin' me feed the chickens and put 'em in the hovels, but—Marse Richard, when dark comes it 's the nacher of a child to want its mother. They can't he'p they nachers."

He did not answer her. In his ears the impassioned cry was sounding, "And Nature's law is God's very own!"

In his perplexity—for Mammy Cely was persistently, though humbly, waiting for instructions—Richard De Jarnette remembered the picture that Bess had given him. With a faint spasm of hope he took it from his pocket and put it in the hand of the old woman.

"Here, show him this. Let him take it to bed with him. That young girl that came on with his mother gave it to me. She said it might help him if he was homesick."

Mammy Cely took the photograph and looked at it with interest, shaking her head and setting her lips together.

"That sholy is got the favor of Miss Margaret,—and Philip too. Jes' look at the little thing with his face pressed up ag'in hers. That 's what he wants to do now! A chile don't want no mo' heaven than that. Yes, sir," —respectfully—"I reckon that 'll do him a heap er good. That young girl certainly was thoughtful! She was so."

There was the slightest drawing down of the corners of Mammy Cely's mouth, as if to combat a tendency they had to go up.

Richard had not much more than settled himself again with John Fiske when he heard Mammy Cely lumbering down the stairs.

"Marse Richard!"

"Well? What do you want now?"

His tone was decidedly irritated.

"I reckon you 'll have to come. The picture don't 'pear to meet the case. Hit's worse an' mo' of it! Soon as he seed his ma's face he busted right out. He 's jes' howlin' now."

Very reluctantly Mr. De Jarnette ascended to his

nephew's room. Frightful wails corroborated the truth of Mammy Cely's assertions and the accuracy of her descriptive powers. The sounds stopped abruptly as the gentleman entered the room, for a man was an unknown quantity in Philip's experience, and his uncle was a stranger to him. But such a tempest of lamentation cannot be shut off entirely at a moment's notice. The child's breath came in convulsive sobs that threatened to disrupt his little body.

"What is the matter, Philip?" asked Mr. De Jarnette, sitting down by the bed. "What are you crying about?"

"I—I want—my—my—my *mama!*"

"You can't have your mama now. She is n't here."

"But—I—*want* my mama!"

"Philip, did n't you hear me say your mama was not here?" Mr. De Jarnette spoke rather sternly. Then, with full confidence in his nephew's reasoning powers, he proceeded to explain that his mama was in the city, miles and miles away from here—that even if he could see her in the morning it would be impossible to do it to-night—that if he was a good little boy, *maybe*—

There is no telling what imprudence he might have been led into by his desire for peace, but at this juncture Philip, who had been quieted for a while by the strangeness of a masculine voice, broke out afresh:

"I want—my ma-a-ma!"

"He's answerin' yo' argyments the same way he did mine, Marse Richard. The color of 'em don't 'pear to make no diff'unce."

It did n't indeed. However forcible and logical was Mr. De Jarnette's line of reasoning, however convincing it seemed temporarily, no sooner was it ended than Philip, with a child's insistent iteration, made reply:

"But I want my ma-a-ma!"

"You git a chile in that frame of mind," moralized Mammy Cely, "and hits reasonin' powers is mighty weak. Jes' as well try to argue with a dose of ipecac after it's down."

"Go on out of here!" commanded Mr. De Jarnette, pausing in his strides across the room with Philip in his arms. And Mammy Cely retired, greatly pleased with the turn affairs were taking.

At the sound of the closing door, Philip broke out into renewed lamentations. His only friend was gone.

"Philip! Stop your crying! Stop, I say!"

In his desperation Mr. De Jarnette spoke far more sternly than he felt. Philip stopped in sheer astonishment. But his mouth and chin puckered themselves up in that most pitiful of all things—a child's attempts at self control.

"I is n't been use—to—scolding," he said, reproachfully.

"I don't want to scold you," Mr. De Jarnette hastened to say, for there were signs of another inundation. "You are going to be a good little boy now and—"

"Is it bad to want my mama?" asked Philip.

"No, but it is foolish to keep on asking for what you can't have."

"Why can't I have my mama?"

"Because she 's not here."

"Why ain't she here?"

"Because she is at the hospital."

"What for?"

"She's sick."

"What makes her sick?"

"Philip, if you will go to sleep now, I will bring you some candy in the morning. Will you do it?"

Philip considered.

"Would it be gum dwops?"

"Yes. Or any other obtainable variety. And some peanuts too—and popcorn balls."

"I'd rather have a jack-knife," said Philip, with faintly-reviving interest.

"Well, you shall have a jack-knife too—and some—fire-crackers,"—ransacking his memory for childish tastes.

"Is it going to be Christmas?" asked his nephew, beginning to feel that life was still worth living.

"Yes. We have Christmas once a month at Elmhurst—oftener if needed."

"Are you Santa Claus?" asked Philip in an awed voice.

"I'm a friend of his," returned Richard gravely, with an odd sense that this was a plagiarism which would be detected.

But there is nothing like the trustingness of childhood.

"Then can you get anything you want from Santa Claus for little boys?"

"Almost anything," said Mr. De Jarnette cautiously, remembering mothers.

It was a fruitful vein and Philip worked it for all it was worth. When at last his eyelids closed over the bright eyes and the curly head lay still against his uncle's breast, Santa Claus's friend stood committed to a bushel of candy, a bag of peanuts, some pink lemonade, a balloon (showing the connection of ideas), a dog, two white rabbits, a sure enough engine, and a billy goat. He considered peace cheaply purchased at that. He would have impoverished the exchequer rather than have had another two hours of conflict.

"Is he likely to keep this up long?" he asked Mammy Cely whom he met in the hall just as he had laid his young nephew on his bed and tip-toed from the room. He wiped his brow nervously.

"Lord, Marse Richard, sometimes a homesick chile will carry on this way for a month. Yes, sir, they will so."

The drops broke out on Richard's forehead.

"He won't be apt to have a return of it to-night, will he?"

"You can't never tell," said Mammy, cruelly. "He may have another spell inside of an hour. Ef he does I'll call you. Seems lak you can pacify him a heap better than what I can. Yes, sir."

CHAPTER XXV

THE MADONNA PICTURE

THE master of Elmhurst returned to it the next night loaded down. He might have passed for a gentleman delivering his own groceries. In the toy store, with a shuddering recollection of what it was to be void of material from which to fashion a bribe, he had made purchases right and left. One would have thought that judiciously doled out they might be made to spread out over the month of weeping that Mammy Cely had darkly hinted at.

Philip had not waked when he left home that morning and there had been no opportunity to see how far a night in his new domicile had succeeded in reconciling him to it. Mr. De Jarnette had what he himself felt was an almost unreasonable anxiety about it. Before he came to live with him the personality of this child seemed a thing of no moment whatever. Now it assumed gigantic proportions. What if Philip did not like the things he had bought for him? What if he refused to be bought by them? He shuddered as he thought of last night and the possibility of its duplication.

Before leaving home that morning he had informed his housekeeper that he had shut up the town house for the present and would come out every night. Moreover, he had directed that Philip should have his dinner with him. That this was a sacrifice was certainly true, but it was one that his conscience demanded. Unsuspected in the

depths of Richard De Jarnette's nature was an active volcano, never sending up fire and smoke that could be seen of men, but keeping up a low rumbling a good deal of the time. It was this that had brought him to live at his country home at a time when he specially desired to absent himself from it. It had issued the fiat that he must forego his quiet evening meal and make himself a martyr to a child's presence. He thought of it with anything but pleasure. But, so ominous was the rumbling within that though he could have avoided it all by a word, for the life of him he could not say the word. He had forcibly taken this child into his own life. He could not evade the responsibility that came with the act.

And yet Richard De Jarnette was considered a hard man.

The dinner proved less of an ordeal than he had expected. Indeed, after the first embarrassment of that strange small presence, it really was rather interesting. He was so unused to children that his small nephew's observations seemed rather remarkable. He did not know that the only way a child learns language is to experiment in its use.

Philip was a well-behaved child, with a natural sense of propriety. Having been reared with grown people he had a somewhat startling use of words, but for the same reason he was entirely self-possessed without a trace of pertness. He had been accustomed to meeting older people on equal terms. He was secretly rather ashamed of his childishness of the night before. As he explained to Mammy Cely it had been because he could not help it.

Seated at the table with freshly brushed locks and all traces of tears gone, he looked quite the little gentleman. Mammy Cely had cautioned him not to talk too much.

But Philip knew enough to hold up his end of the conversation.

"Well, Philip, how have you and Mammy Cely got along to-day?"

"Pretty well," said Philip, cheerfully.

"What have you been doing to amuse yourself?"

Philip considered. He had done a great many things, for Mammy Cely had taken a day off to amuse and entertain him.

"I can't explain it," he said at length. "I forgot the number." What he meant Richard never knew, and it is quite likely that Philip had no very definite idea himself.

Later he remembered about putting the chickens in the "hovels," which he related with animation. After a pause he asked politely:

"Do you have any turkles around here?"

"Turkeys?" suggested his uncle.

"No, sir—turkles—mud-turkles. We had a gweat many in Sous Haven. I had four—only Vi'let got away and Lily got *squshed.*"

"Did you name your turtles?"

"Yes, sir."

"What were their names?" Mr. De Jarnette was surprised at his interest in carrying on this conversation.

"Rose, and Lily, and Vi'let,—and—Alcohol," said Philip.

Richard gave a sudden cough.

"Is n't that rather a remarkable combination?" he asked, gravely.

"I think Alcohol is a good name for a turkle," said Philip, positively. "It 's such a long name. And turkles are round."

"What did you say happened to Lily?"

"Why, once I took my turkles upstair in a cup so I would have them as soon as I got up, and—they got out and was promenadin' around, and—in the morning Mama did n't see 'em and she stepped on Lily and she *squshed.*" Then with a spasm of reminiscence, "Mama don't 'preciate turkles."

When Richard De Jarnette went into his library that night it was with a strange feeling of the freshness of life. He had been walking up and down the garden walks for an hour, holding his nephew by the hand.

Mammy Cely had come for him at last, saying in an aside. "I 'm gwineter git him off while times is good." Then to Philip, "Tell yo' Uncle Richard good-night, honey."

"Good-night, Uncle Wichard," he said, obediently.

"Good-night, Philip."

The child stood as if waiting.

"He 's waiting fur you to kiss him," prompted Mammy Cely. "He ain't used to goin' off 'thout bein' kissed."

Richard De Jarnette stooped down to the little boy, who put his arms around his neck as if that were the only way to do.

"Good-night, Philip," he repeated.

"Good-night, Uncle Wichard. Now you have to say, 'God bless my boy.' "

"God bless my boy," said Richard De Jarnette, after a moment's surprised delay.

"God bless my mama—my Unker Wichard," Philip said, as simply as he said it every night, and went away quite satisfied.

An hour or two later, when darkness had descended upon the land and the whippoorwill was sounding his lonely call, Mammy Cely appeared at the library door.

"Marse Richard, the circus done let in."

"He has n't begun that performance again!"

"Well," replied Mammy Cely, conservatively, "not to say the reely pufformance. But the band 's chunin' up. And look lak you 's the ring-master. I ain't got no mo' to say now than one of the spotted ponies or the clown. He done call fur *you.*"

It was inevitable. Mr. De Jarnette laid down his book.

"What is it, Philip?" he asked kindly, as he sat down by the bed.

"Nothing—only—I thes 'emembered it was Lily instead of Vi'let got away. It was Vi'let that got squshed."

"Oh!"

"He 's jes' makin' talk, Marse Richard," explained Mammy Cely in an undertone. "He can't go to sleep and he wants you to stay with him. I know chil'n."

There is something irresistible in a child's turning from some one else to us. It is the subtlest kind of flattery.

"I 'll stay with him a while. Go on down-stairs if you want to." He half wanted to try the experiment of managing him alone.

When she was gone he said quietly, "Philip, would you rather have me stay with you than Mammy Cely?"

"Yes, sir. You see—I is n't used to—any black person at night."

"I see. If I stay with you will you be a brave little boy and not cry?"

"Yes, sir. My mama told me—I must be bwave, but—" one little hand covered his lips in a futile attempt to shut off a sob—"I 'm afraid I—can't—be—ver-r-ry bwave!"

Richard De Jarnette held out his arms. Coming up

the stairs he had vowed he would not do this thing. "Do you want to sit in my lap?"

"Yes, sir!"

In his uncle's protecting embrace, the nervous, overwrought child said stoutly:

"They is n't any big black dogs 'wound here, is they, Unker Wichard?"

"No, indeed."

"And they is n't anybody trying to get me away from my—from anybody, *is* there?"

"There is nothing that is going to hurt you, Philip," was the grave, but reassuring reply.

Philip lay still a few moments in relieved content. Then he enquired seductively, "You don't know any stories, do you, Unker Wichard?" Adding, with a little catch in his voice, "My mama always tells me stories."

"Stories are not much in my line, Philip. But perhaps I could grind out one."

"I 'most know I could n't go to sleep on one," said Philip, with thrifty providence. "Maybe I could if you could 'member three. I 'd try."

"All right."

Philip settled himself for solid comfort. If there was one thing that he loved better than all the world except his mother, it was a good story.

"This is a story about a dog I saw to-day on Pennsylvania Avenue."

"What was his name?"

"I did n't hear his name."

"Was it Rover?"

"I don't know."

"Do you think it was Carlo?"

"I told you I did n't know his name."

"Well, I never knew any people told stories they did n't know," commented his auditor.

Thus chastened at the outset, Richard lost that confidence which is the prime essential to success in the gentle art of story-telling. He proceeded a little doubtfully.

"This morning, Philip, as I was getting on a car—"

"What car?"

"One on Pennsylvania Avenue."

"Was it a green car or a yellow one?"

"It was a yellow one."

"It was n't a wed car?"

"No, it was a yellow one."

"Oh! Well—"

"Well, as I got on, a man stepped on the back platform, and his dog wanted to get on, too. But the man drove him back and then got on, thinking, I suppose, that the dog had gone home. But instead of that the dog ran to the front of the car, and when the car started he walked in and stood in front of his master, as much as to say, 'Well, I did it, anyway!' Was n't he a smart dog?"

Philip was silent a moment.

"Did n't he say anything?"

"Who—the man?"

"No—the dog."

"Why, certainly not."

"Did n't he wink?"

"Wink? No."

"What did the man say?"

"He did n't say anything. He opened his paper and went to reading."

Philip waited.

"What 's the rest of it?" he asked at length.

"There is n't any more. That 's the end of the story." He said it in rather a shame-faced way.

Philip raised himself to a sitting posture and looked his uncle straight in the eye.

"Unker Wichard," he said, quietly, "did you think that was a story?"

"I had thought so," acknowledged Mr. De Jarnette. "I see my mistake now." Then, with a momentary flash of spirit, he enquired, "What 's wrong with that story, any way?"

"It don't begin right. You have to say, 'Once on a time—'"

"Oh, you do? Well, if you know my story better than I do, suppose you tell it."

"I can't," said Philip. "I 'd rather tell you when you get it wrong," thus unconsciously enunciating a principle of criticism as old as time. If all the critics had to pass a novitiate as image-makers before they were admitted to the bar as image-breakers, there is danger that the race would become extinct. But this critic was not through.

"And then—Unker Wichard, do you think a dog that don't say anything in a story 'mounts to much?"

"But, Philip, dogs don't talk, you know."

"Wolfs talk." Philip was reasoning from analogy. "And so do bears. Don't you 'member the old papa bear saying, 'Who 's been sitting in my chair?' and the little baby bear saying, 'Who 's been sitting in my chair?" suiting his tone to their respective ages and sizes. "And don't you 'member 'bout *Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit?*"

"But they were not dogs," weakly suggested the story-teller, conscious that he was begging the question.

"The dogs talk in my mama's stories. And she knows their names, too. Unker Wichard! *where* is *ma-a-ma?*"

With the blue eyes filling and that blood-curdling sentence on the grieved lips, Richard De Jarnette felt the hair of his flesh rising.

"Philip," he said, hastily, "do you want me to tell you 'Little Red Riding Hood?'"

This was Philip's favorite story, and he swallowed his tears and prepared to listen.

Mr. De Jarnette was not very sure of his ground, but in a general way he remembered the story and with fatal fatuity trusted to be able to supply satisfactory details. Alas for the success of such a scheme! A child's memory for stories is verbal and circumstantial, and a deviation is a crime.

"Once on a time," began Mr. De Jarnette—he was sure of this much—"there was a little girl named Red Riding Hood. I don't know why she was named that. It was almost as odd a name for a girl as 'Alcohol' was for a turtle." This was padding. He had perceived that his other story was too condensed.

"It was 'cause she had a little red cloak with a hood," said Philip. "That 's part of the story."

"Of course. I had n't thought of that." It came to Mr. De Jarnette whimsically that he was sharing the fate of all padders. Philip had instantly picked out the spurious material and thrown it aside.

"Well, this little girl lived with her mother, but she had an old—an old-d—aunt—"

"It was her grandmother," corrected his audience.

"So it was—her grandmother. Don't hesitate about setting me right any time, Philip."

"No, sir, I won't. I see you don't know it very well."

"H-m. Well, this little girl went over one day to take her aun—her grandmother some flowers—"

"Unker Wichard," said Philip in a tone of real distress, "it was n't flowers! It was a pot of butter."

"I believe you are right. Well—"

The story went on haltingly, and with many corrections and amendments. It seemed incredible to Philip that anybody could tell a story so poorly.

Once when the thrilling part was reached detailing the colloquy between the little maid and the wicked wolf, Mr. De Jarnette unhappily dropped into the indirect quotation—a thing that has spoiled many a dramatic passage in the pulpit.

"—So when the little girl asked the wolf what made his eyes so large he told her it was so that he could see everything."

Philip had been sorely tried before. But at this mangling of a fine thing he cried out in utter exasperation,

"Unker Wichard! *That* is n't the way! Little Wed Widing Hood says, 'Gwandmother, what makes your ey-y-es so big?'" His own matched the wolf's. "And then the old wolf says, 'To *se-e-e* the better, my dear!'" His voice was terrible to hear.

"That 's what I said, Philip—in substance."

"Yes, but you did n't say it like you believed it. When my mama tells it I can just *hear* the old wolf. *Unker Wichard, where is—*"

"Philip, I have n't finished the story yet."

In his alarm he threw himself into the remainder of the narrative with a frantic eagerness that was fairly satisfactory. Even with the highly dramatic close Philip found no fault. But when it stopped he sat with muscles tense, and eyes eager. He was plainly waiting for something else.

"Well?" he said.

Mr. De Jarnette was puzzled.

"Well? That 's the end."

Philip became limp.

"My mama always jumps at me, and kisses me, and eats me up," he announced in a dignified manner. He felt distinctly defrauded. "The end is always the best part of my mama's stories."

What merciless critics children are! How by instinct they see the weak point and how unerringly they strike for it!

They rocked in silence for a while and then Philip asked in a polite tone in which there was still a note of hope,

"Do you know Bible stories any better than you do this kind, Unker Wichard?" He was willing to give his uncle another chance.

But that humiliated gentleman was forced to acknowledge that he knew even less about Bible stories than the kind he had been relating.

"Then I guess I 'll go to sleep," his nephew decided, with unflattering renunciation.

But sleep was hard to woo to-night.

"I do shut 'em tight and tight and tight. But they fly open." Then after a further trial, "Unker Wichard, I can't never go to sleep without kissing mama."

"Philip, suppose you tell me a Bible story," suggested Mr. De Jarnette, hurriedly. "What do you know?"

Philip reflected. A story of his telling would keep his uncle there just the same.

"I know 'Moses in the Bulwushes.' "

"That will do nicely. Wait a minute. Let me turn down the light. Now I 'll rock you while you tell it. Go on."

"Well—Once there was a little boy named Moses. And he looked thes like me."

"Ought n't you to say, 'Once upon a time'?" suggested his uncle, maliciously.

"Why, no, sir! Not with Bible stories."

"Oh!"

"You have to say, 'Once there was a little boy named Moses.' And my mama says he looked thes like me. He was so sweet—and so sweet—and so sweet! His mama used ter kiss him and kiss him and kiss him and kiss him and kiss him and kiss him and—"

"There! she 's kissed him enough now. Go on."

"Well, there was a wicked man in that country and he was going to take all the little chilwuns from their mamas."

"Where was that country?"

"I don't know, sir. I asked mama where it was and she said she guessed it was Washington."

"Humph!"

"But I don't believe it was, though, 'cause Gwandma Pennybacker thes laughed the way she does when mama is fooling. But anyway he was a' awful bad man, 'cause he wanted to take the chilwuns from their mamas." He waited a moment for indorsement of this sentiment, and receiving none, asked, "Ain't that wicked, Unker Wichard?"

"Supposed to be—yes."

"Well—Moses's mother did n't want him to get her little boy, so she hid him—in the bulwushes. She did! I know she did, 'cause my mama said so. And-d, she set the basket down in the bulwushes at the edge of the wiver—Black Wiver—wight where the fwogs and the turkles was. Unker Wichard, once I was Moses!"

"Indeed? In a former incarnation, I suppose."

"No, sir. It was n't in a carnation, at all. It was in a basket. And it was on a wiver."

"Philip, what are you talking about?"

"I *was* Moses. My mama said I was—her little Moses. We was on a boat, and there was a wicked man trying to get me, and my mama put me in a basket, and—"

Richard began to listen with interest. He had never known how that feat had been accomplished. Smeltzer had not dilated on it much.

"—and she covered me up in the basket—thes like Moses—and that woman my mama hugged that day said maybe they would think I was soiled clothes—but I *was n't* any soiled clothes! Gwandma Pennybacker said I was n't even *clean* clothes, and I kept thes as still, 'cause mama said that wicked man would get me if I made a noise."

"What did they do with you?"

"Why, that woman and another man lifted me out of the boat and took me somewhere—and I stayed there a hundred hours—and then the boat was gone—and another boat come along (but it was n't the Gwand Wapids), and we got on it and my mama thes cried and cried and cried. Was n't that funny that she cried when we had got away? But she did n't put me down with the fwogs and the turkles! She held me tight and tight and tight." The recollection of that sweet embrace was too much for him.

"Unker Wichard—"

With a child all roads lead to Rome. The story ended as the others had—"Where 's my ma-a-ma?"

When Richard De Jarnette got back to his library he felt as if he had had a nerve tapped. If this was to continue indefinitely he would became a driveling imbecile. The plaint had such a haunting, piteous ring!

As he was turning over the papers on the library table his hand accidentally encountered the picture Bess had given him. He took it up and looked at it.

It was Margaret at her best. The roundness of curve

belonging to young womanhood was still there, but when he thought of her as a bride it seemed to him that this face had in it a subtle something that the bride's face did not have. Maternity had deepened the shadows around the eyes, and care—inseparable from maternity—had added lines here and there that would never be retouched. The mouth was firmer than he remembered his sister-in-law's to have been. He recalled how like a child's that mouth had been the day he told her Victor was gone.

It was a rare face, in contour and in character. He smiled to think how faces, like figures, could lie. Yes, a beautiful face, but not one especially to stir a man. It was pure madonna. A pair of chubby arms were clasped about her neck, and to her softly rounded cheek was pressed a baby face—so like her own—and yet to Richard's eyes so like another baby face that he remembered well. The picture was good of Philip now, though it must have been taken—well, perhaps—

He turned the picture over to look for a possible date.

"For Grandma Pennybacker,"

it said in Margaret's writing, and then

"Baby Philip—aged two."

Below this was a newspaper clipping pasted neatly on the card. He read the title curiously: "My Page," and then the lines. It seemed to have been put there as though the picture and the poem belonged together.

"Long years ago I held within my grasp
An open page—a fair, white, goodly page—

Whereon to write a life. I filled it full,—
With love and love's sweet ministries,—with home
And the dear homely cares which make most full
A woman's life—my husband's sheltering care,
And the soft prattle of a baby's voice.
And then, in very peace and restfulness,
I closed my eyes and said, 'I thank Thee, Lord,
For life!' "

He turned the picture over and looked long at the face. He did not see Philip's this time. What was this thing? Had she written it herself, or only found it somewhere and pasted it on the back of the photograph before giving it away? Perhaps the older woman had put it there. He read on:

"A moment only—then I heard,
'A happy, sheltered life—but 't is not thine.'
I reached my hand to grasp my treasured page;
It closed upon a bare, blank sheet—no more.
And still the voice said, 'Write!' "

He looked again at the picture. This sounded as if it might be an echo from her own life. Was it? Yet he had always thought her so cold.

"Through falling tears
That blurred the page and well-nigh hid the lines,
With fainting heart and faltering hand I took
The pen. It seemed that there was nothing more
To write. I could not fill the page. One bare,
Bald word came to me as I wrote. That word
Was Duty, and I wrote it o'er and o'er.
And then—so tender is our God!—so kind!—

The words grew luminous beneath my pen,
And as I wrote were changed to 'Peace' and 'Jóy.'

" 'And was it then the same fair page?' Ah, no!
This had a margin, wide and deep and bare,
With many a name erased and line left out;
But 't was my own—my very own—and all
I had; and clutching it with death-like grip,
I held it to me as I wrote once more."

There came to him the very sound of her voice as she said passionately to him the day he tried to effect a reconciliation, "All I want now is to be allowed to live my own life—with my child!"

"A whirlwind came—a tempest fierce and wild,
Broke on my helpless head and bore me down;
It wrenched my page away and beat it in
The ground. And then it passed and left me there,
A broken, prostrate thing. But ere the surge
And roar had ceased there fell upon my ear
The same word, 'Write!'

" 'Why, Lord!' I cried, 'how can
I write? My page is gone!—the fragments torn
And soiled and beaten to the earth! *One scrap*
Alone I hold of all that once was mine!'
The voice said tenderly, 'Take that thou hast
And write.' Awe-struck, I listened and obeyed.

"I took the scrap, so pitifully small,
Smoothed out the crumpled edges, and began.
And as I wrote—oh, marvel unforeseen!—
A hand invisible, divine, joined on

Another scrap, and smoothed the seam, and made
It ready for my pen.

"And thus, as days
Go on, the page still grows. 'T is not the one
I fain would have; 't is seamed and tempest-stained
And blurred with many tears. 'T is not the one
I planned; but as I look at it I know
It is the one my Father meant for me,
And so—because He bids me—still I write."

Richard De Jarnette laid the picture down gently and went outside. He felt bewildered. It was a moonless, starless night. For an hour or more a glowing spark moved back and forth, back and forth, in the rose garden his mother had planted.

CHAPTER XXVI

FACE TO FACE

IT was weeks before Margaret emerged from the shadow of death that fell upon her that day in the court-room. When she did she looked like one of the shades. The fever had wrought sad ravages.

"It 's too bad!" whispered Maria Van Dorn to Bess the first time she saw her. "A woman has lost all when she 's lost her beauty." And she glanced with a degree of satisfaction at her own fair reflection. The contrast was striking. Maria had never been in better flesh or color.

"I had n't thought of that," said Bess. "I 'm so glad to see her alive."

But if Margaret's cheeks were hollow and the rose tint gone, the light that shone above them was undimmed. From their deep setting her great eyes glowed like smouldering coals.

They kept her at the hospital as long as they could, delaying the home-coming upon every possible pretext. When at last she came the house was swept and garnished but very empty.

She went from room to room. They had removed every trace of a child's presence as people do when the dead are laid away.

"I want every thing put back in its place," she said,— "his bed, his chair, his playthings. They must be ready

for him when he comes." Then, as Mrs. Pennybacker looked up with quick apprehension, she said with a smile, "No, it is not fever; it is faith. I thought it all out while I was at the hospital. God will never let me lose my child."

When Judge Kirtley came she talked it over with a calm cheerfulness that amazed him,—listening to his report of what had been done and putting in now and then a question which showed her mind to be clear and alert. While she was helpless Judge Kirtley had not been idle. His next move, he told her, would be to attack the validity of the law upon which the will rested. Since the will itself had been sustained by the Probate Court, and that decision had been practically reaffirmed by the court which had just awarded the custody of the child to the guardian, and they had no new evidence to offer, this seemed to him their best show. In all his practice he had never known a case of this kind before, and he proposed now to test the law. He had associated with himself a firm of successful attorneys in middle life who were working upon the case with much interest.

"We may not see the end of this for a long time, my child, but when we do I expect to have a decision in your favor."

"It will be."

She said it with such implicit confidence that he felt impelled to say, remembering her former hopefulness and its disastrous overthrow, "Still, it is always wise to look the possibility of defeat in the face."

"No," she said, "I will not look the possibility of defeat in the face. Some day I will get him." It seemed almost as if her faith were inspired.

The court had provided that she should see the child

at stated intervals, he told her. Philip was now at Mr. De Jarnette's country home, and was, he was informed, well and happy.

Her lips tightened. "I will go to him to-day," she said.

"Margaret, if this thing could be settled out of court it would save you a great deal of anxiety and tedious waiting. It is just possible that having been successful, Mr. De Jarnette might be in a compromising frame of mind. Sometimes it works that way. Could you make up your mind to see him yourself?"

"I can make up my mind to do anything that is necessary," she said.

It seemed to the old Judge that no heart of flesh and blood could withstand her as she looked that day.

SITTING by the window of his office the next afternoon Mr. De Jarnette saw his sister-in-law's carriage drive slowly down the street and stop before the Conococheague building. Mr. Harcourt was beside her. He was much at the Massachusetts Avenue house these days, and Mrs. Pennybacker encouraged it. "Your nonsense will do her good just now," she told him. "She needs a breeze from the outside world that will freshen the air without blowing directly upon her." After this he fell into the habit of dropping in at odd times—after office hours, and occasionally for Sunday night supper. Mr. De Jarnette had noticed on the day of the trial when Margaret lay in a faint that he came directly to her as though his place were at her side. Looking at them now as they sat there together and thinking of all that had occurred in this room he felt somehow bereft anew.

After his brother's death he had given up his own room across the hall and moved into the one Victor had

occupied. Dr. Semple had urged him to give up the suite and go somewhere else, but with an obstinacy which was a part of the man he refused.

On the floor was still the dark spot made by Victor De Jarnette's life blood. His brother would never even have the carpet changed. Only the luxurious furnishings of the room had given place to the plain office furniture of the room across the hall.

It was here that he received Margaret. If he had planned her coming he would have received her here.

It was the first time she had been in the room since the day her husband lay dead on the floor. Instinctively her eyes sought the place, and Richard De Jarnette watching her closely, saw a shudder pass through her. The same expression of horror that convulsed her features that day came over them again. It was but momentary, however. She had come here for a purpose and she was not to be deterred. She threw her soul into that plea.

"You come to me here," he said at length, in a tone that promised little—"in this room—to urge the setting aside of my dead brother's will?"

"Why should I not? You know he had no right to make such a will—no moral right."

"He had a legal right," he said, cruelly. "On that I stand." Then looking at her fixedly and speaking with slow emphasis as if weighing every word and giving her time to do the same: "Had he been permitted to live out his life he might, himself, have changed the provisions of that will—have rescinded that which you feel to be cruel and unnatural—that which I do not say was *not* cruel and unnatural. But—" his eyes sought the brown spot on the floor, and hers followed them,—"before he could do this his life was cut off—"

"By his own hand," she protested.

"—and the possibility of undoing what he had done was wrested from him. Well! Let it stand."

She looked at him as if she were trying to fathom his meaning. But his face was inscrutable. Then she rose.

"I have made my last appeal to you," she said. "It is useless to humiliate myself further. I came here hoping against hope that having vindicated before the world your legal right to the guardianship and custody of my child, you might then be so just, so generous, as to give him back into the keeping of his natural guardian. But I have overrated you."

He surprised her by a reply to this.

"Did it ever occur to you," he asked quietly, "that you might have underrated me?"

"No. Never."

"Suppose for one moment—for purposes of argument only—that I am not the black-hearted thing you think me—that I would not drag shrieking children from their mother's breasts for the mere pleasure of the thing—can you then conceive no reason why I should feel that I and not you—*you*—" he was looking searchingly at her now, his eyes narrowing and concentrating their gleam upon her face—"should have the keeping of my dead brother's child?"

She shook her head slowly, wonderingly.

"I can conceive no reason, no possible reason. Oh, I have made mistakes, if that is what you mean. But they were the mistakes of a brute mother robbed. A tigress when she sees a cobra hanging near does not wait to have the Jungle's Lord High Magistrate pass upon the case! She springs and falls upon it, or—despairing of that—snatches up her cub and flees with it to a place of safety. *I did that—no more!* I was a woman—I could

not strike—and so I caught up my child and fled. The Judge says I broke the law,—" she threw back her head with the old imperious gesture— "I say I kept it—Nature's law, implanted by a greater than judge or jury. But, humanly speaking, it was a mistake—I grant you that. I should have stayed and trusted to the chance that a stone might melt, have knelt, a suppliant at your feet, saying, 'Oh, sir, I recognize your right! The law, of course, is just! But—give a poor girl back her baby!' "

Richard De Jarnette sat motionless before her, not taking his eyes from her face, not indicating in any way that he felt her thrusts. If this was acting it was good of its kind.

Dropping her tone of bitter satire she went on.

"Yes, a mistake—but one that I shall not make again. I was then scarcely more than child myself. A child fighting against a strong man and the law. . . But let it pass. Now I am a woman, full-grown and old, old! A few years like these would crowd eternity." She stopped a moment and then went on. She was not through yet.

"Richard De Jarnette, you have might on your side,—the will—a wicked, wicked one; a law—so infamous that its very wording reeks to high heaven; and the decision of the court. Against all these I put my woman's patience and the right—and I defy you! I shall win! This time I shall be patient,—oh, so patient,—and tireless as the insects on a coral reef. It will be long,—perhaps I may be gray-headed when it comes—but some day —" again she threw her head back, not raising her voice above its former low pitch, but speaking with incisive utterance that cut the air— "some day *I shall have my child.* For it is right. And in the end right wins."

She made a movement to pass out, but he stopped her by a gesture.

"One moment, please. There is something concerning Philip about which I would like to speak to you. Will you not be seated?"

"Thank you, I will stand."

He raised his brows slightly and went on.

"While I have declined, and shall decline, to relinquish my right to the custody of my dead brother's child—" Margaret's eyes flashed—he always spoke of the child in this way—never as hers—*"and I think you know why*—I do not wish to make it harder for you than is necessary. The court has granted you the privilege of seeing him at stated times. For reasons that it is not necessary at this time to give, I prefer that those meetings should be at my home rather than at yours. The boy will be kept for the present at Elmhurst under the care of his old nurse whom you know and trust."

Margaret bowed assent.

"I will say to you frankly that I do not consider it for the child's best good that your visits should be more frequent than provided by the court—"

"In other words, you want him to forget me," she broke in bitterly.

He did not answer the outburst.

"—but the trains run past Elmhurst at such hours that it would be difficult to make the trip in a morning or afternoon. At any time that it suits your convenience to be there at luncheon, I trust you will feel at liberty to do so."

She looked at him in amazement. Then she said proudly, "Pardon me. I could hardly bring myself to do that, Mr. De Jarnette."

He bowed gravely.

"As you will. Another thing: the station is some distance from the house. If you will let them know when to expect you, the carriage will always be there to meet you."

There seemed the strangest incongruity in this iron man's arranging for her comfort and convenience, while persistently doing the one thing that broke her heart. She felt suddenly ashamed of her ungraciousness.

"Thank you," she said "for your courtesy. I—I beg that you will pardon my rudeness. True, the right to be always with my child is already mine—I do not relinquish one jot or tittle of that claim—but I realize that you have done more than the law required of you. For this I thank you. But it must be distinctly understood that I am not to be bought off by it. Nor will my efforts to recover my child be relaxed. The fight is on between us, and I warn you that I shall *never* give it up."

"Never is a long time," he said as he opened the door for her and bowed her out.

"A long time," she repeated, "except for God and mothers."

WHEN Richard De Jarnette went back into his office he sat down with his long legs stretched out before him and his eyes staring at the brown spot on the carpet. For a long, long time he did not stir. At last he roused himself.

"I would give ten years of my life," he said, *"ten years*—to know."

CHAPTER XXVII

AT ELMHURST

IF there had been any latent doubts in the minds of Margaret's friends as to her force of character they were dispelled in the weeks that followed. She had come back from the hospital wasted in flesh but resolute of soul. Her period of convalescence had been a season of gathering strength for a protracted effort. She would waste no force after this in beating her wings against restraining bars. It almost seemed to Mrs. Pennybacker as she watched her that she had had a new birth. Her whole nature was deepened and broadened. Even her interview with Mr. De Jarnette did not daunt her.

"I have been too impatient," she said once. "I can see now how I have injured my cause by injudicious haste. If I had not run off with Philip I might have him now. I know Judge Kirtley thinks that prejudiced my cause, and you know what the Judge said."

"Still, it was instinct."

"Yes, but I find that this is a thing about which I must use more than instinct. Oh, I am going to try to be very prudent and very patient. I don't want to do anything that will lose me one point."

"Margaret," said Mrs. Pennybacker, plainly, "you are losing more than a point in refusing the opportunity

that Richard De Jarnette puts in your hands. A whole day instead of an hour is a great gain. If you take my advice you will not only accept that offer but you will thank him personally or by letter for it."

"I cannot," Margaret said passionately, the prudence and patience she had felt so sure of cast to the winds. "I will not be indebted to him for one thing. Even for the sake of being with Philip I cannot do it."

"You are very foolish. It means more than being with Philip."

"How could it possibly help me in any other way?"

"There is a principle of human nature involved in it. This is a kindness that Richard De Jarnette meant to do you,—you will acknowledge that?"

"Ye-s, but—"

"Well, a kindness done always disposes the heart of the person doing it toward the person to whom it is done."

"I don't want his heart disposed toward me!" cried the girl. "He is a cruel, despotic man. I hate him and I want to hate him!"

Mrs. Pennybacker looked at her over the top of her glasses.

"Patience has hardly had her perfect work with you yet, Margaret," she observed, dryly.

It was true, as Margaret had said, that she did not want any favors at Mr. De Jarnette's hands. She was angry with him for placing her under obligation in the matter of the carriage: angry at herself for allowing him to do it: and angry and hurt both at Mrs. Pennybacker's censure. They ought to know how she would feel, she told herself, with that isolation of soul which comes to us when our nearest friends fail to understand.

But when she found herself the next morning at the

little country station a mile and a half from Elmhurst in a drizzling rain, saw a solitary carriage in waiting, and heard a respectful voice that belonged to a past age saying, as a respectful hat was raised from a grizzled old head, "Is you de lady wha 's goin' to Elmhurst, ma'am?" she could not but acknowledge to herself that her brother-in-law knew more about conditions than she did and had thoughtfully prepared for them.

"Yaas 'm," the old driver explained as she stepped into the carriage, "Marse Richard he say you 'd be comin' out pretty *cornstant* fur a while an' I was to keep de carriage up dem days so 's you could have it whenuver you say de word. He 'low you 'd mos' likely not want it tell evenin'."

"I shall want it in about an hour," she said, with a sinking sense of the shortness of the time, "to meet the noon train." Then she clenched her hands in a swift fierce anger that this man should be able to impose restrictions upon her movements.

When she reached the house and got Philip in her arms she was almost sorry she had committed herself. How quickly the time was flying!

She had hoped that the child would not be unhappy, but she was mortally afraid of his ceasing to mourn for her. Her illness had kept her away so long, and he was so young! Mammy Cely with intuitive tact dilated upon the scenes of those first few nights when he had refused to be comforted, and it was all as manna to her hungry soul. Then Philip, expecting commendation, said "But I don't cwy any more, mama. Unker Wichard bwings me candy, and he says I'm a good little boy now."

"Philip," she cried despairingly, "don't you care for mama as you did at first? Don't you still want her at night?"

It seemed to her she could not bear it.

"Why, yes, mama," the child said wonderingly, "but you said I must be bwave."

She caught him to her arms in a passion of jealousy. After all, bravery was an unnatural virtue in a child.

"Oh, Mammy Cely," she begged when at last she tore herself away from him, *"don't* let him forget me!"

"I aint gwineter let him forgit you, Miss Margaret—don't you worry! *Whenever I think of Cass* I gwinter call you to that chile's 'membrance. Yaas 'm, I is so!"

And on this assurance she was forced to rest.

Twice a week the court had said: Those visits came to be Margaret's meat and drink. To the child as time went by they were only an incident in his daily life. He had settled into the every-day routine of the place, lonely sometimes, but finding in Mammy Cely and Uncle Tobe companions very much to his taste. Every old negro of the ancient school is an Uncle Remus to some child, and Uncle Tobe was no exception. He and his wife, Aunt Dicey, lived in one of the cabins behind the house as they had done before the war. They had been pensioners of Richard De Jarnette's through all the years of his residence in Washington. Now that he had come back to Elmhurst with his little nephew, they fell into line as cook and coachman. The old carriage, so long unused, was brought out for Margaret's special use, Uncle Tobe furbishing it up for the occasion with tremulous eagerness. It seemed to him almost like a revival of the old days when "Miss Julia" had to be driven around.

They were all very kind to the child. He fed the chickens and hunted for eggs, and played with the gourds that Aunt Dicey still planted and hoarded. She always had pomegranates too that she took from some myster-

ous place about her bed. But he liked the gourds best, because they were of so many different sizes that he could play they were almost anything.

He followed Mammy Cely about incessantly through the day and as evening came on would run down through the lawn with the big elm trees in it to meet his Uncle Richard. Mr. De Jarnette fell into the habit of looking for the solitary little figure perched on the post of the big gate. When he saw him Philip would sing out, "Hello, Unker Wichard!" and then, dropping to the ground, would tug manfully to open the gate which Richard by a sleight-of-hand performance most remarkable to Philip, could open from his horse. It was such a manifest mortification to the child not to be able to do this from the ground that Mr. De Jarnette sent Uncle Tobe down one day to remedy the sagging so that the feat could be accomplished. Then Philip's joy and pride knew no bounds, and when the gate was opened with much tugging and blowing, Richard would lean down and lift the child in front of him for a canter up the road. He came to look forward to it with almost as much pleasure as Philip did. He could remember when Victor did the same thing.

The day Margaret came Mammy Cely had shown her Philip's room, a great gloomy unattractive apartment, whose windows like those of the library below were carefully curtained from the light.

"A horrible room for a child!" Margaret had exclaimed. "It looks like a prison."

Mammy was deeply disappointed. For her part she could see nothing the matter with the room. It was exactly as her Miss Julia had left it. It had never been changed even by the second Mrs. De Jarnette. And it was scrupulously clean. She had herself painted the

hearth that morning with a preparation of brickdust and milk laid on with a rag, which was supposed in her day to put the finishing touch to an apartment with an open fireplace.

"A child ought to have cheerful surroundings and light," Margaret had said, pushing back the heavy curtain. "And this paper! It is enough to give him the horrors."

Mammy Cely had never thought any of these things about the room, but the next morning she spoke to Mr. De Jarnette as he was starting to town.

"Marse Richard, is it ever occurred to yo' mind that Philip's room ain 't no fittin' place fur him to stay?"

"No," said Mr. De Jarnette, in surprise. "What is the matter with it?"

"That room 's too sorrowful lookin' fur a chile, Marse Richard. Hit ought to have some sort of hilarious paper on the walls, and tarletan curtains or somethin' that will let in the sunshine. Yaas, sir. Chil'n needs light, jes' like plants."

Mr. De Jarnette listened without replying, but he turned back and went to Philip's room.

It certainly was rather a gloomy place, he reflected, though he had never thought of it before. The Brussels carpet was big-figured and dark and worn, the moths having consumed a yard or so around the edge. Loving darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil they had found here a congenial home. Mammy had seen to it that the curtains were closely drawn. He groped his way across the room and shook them impatiently, remembering that a child needed light. They gave out a musty smell. Then he looked at the walls. The paper certainly could not be called hilarious.

He looked around the room with a growing discontent

and uncertainty of himself. Strange that an old negro should have thought of all this. He could see now that it was no place for a child. But he had been into that room time and again and it had never occurred to *him.* Women seemed to have a sort of instinct for these things.

He made no comment when he came down, nor did Mammy Cely. Being wise in her generation she left her seed to germinate. But he said to her one morning a week or two later, "Get the things moved out of Philip's room. I am going to have some work done in it. The men will be out to-day."

The painters and paper-hangers were hardly through when a load of furniture came out from Washington. Mr. De Jarnette being in doubt as to the exact amount of hilarity that the good of a child demanded, had gone to a decorator and put the matter in his hands; then to a furniture store, telling the proprietor that he wanted suitable furniture and drapery for a child's room which must be light and cheerful. The bedroom suit already in it was solid mahogany and almost priceless as an antique, but Mr. De Jarnette gave him *carte blanche,* and the dealer naturally made the most of his opportunity.

There was a scurrying around at Elmhurst that last day as there had not been since the advent of the second Mrs. De Jarnette. Mammy Cely was bent upon having all in readiness by the time Philip's mother came. Mr. De Jarnette apparently did not know that Philip had a mother. He had never asked any questions about her comings or her goings. What he was doing was for Philip.

When Margaret came Mammy Cely took her with great pride to the room. In view of her disapproval before there was every reason to expect approval now. And then the room itself commanded it.

On the walls morning-glories climbed over a neutral

ground, clustering thick over a trellis at the top where an occasional butterfly and humming bird poised as if just ready to fly. The dark stained woodwork had given place to an ivory white. A pretty matting was on the floor and over this a cheery rug in such colors as a child might like, while the four great windows were hung with simple muslin curtains draped high to let in the autumn light.

Margaret stood just inside the room and surveyed it all—the little white bed, the diminutive dresser and chiffonier of bird's eye maple where last week had been the heavy mahogany—even a set of shelves which held Philip's rapidly accumulating treasures.

"And see, mama, my little wocking chair that Unker Wichard bwinged me," said Philip.

She turned away with mouth so stern that Mammy Cely asked anxiously, "Did n't they fix it right, Miss Margaret?" Somehow the room had not been the success she had hoped.

The human heart is full of strange contradictions. As she looked at all these things—just what she herself would have chosen for a child's room—there came to Margaret a fierce anger that he, her enemy, should have done it. He was trying to worm himself into the child's affections,—trying to buy his love. She had gone home the week before telling of that gloomy room and hugging to her soul this grievance. Robbed of it, she felt defrauded.

A sudden thought struck her. "Did you tell Mr. De Jarnette what I said?"

"No, *ma'am,*" declared Mammy Cely, not doubting that what she said was Gospel truth. "I ain't tole him nothin' 'tall 'bout what you said. I jes' mentioned to him that the room was sorter mournful, an' that was

enough. Miss Margaret, honey, it look to me lak Marse Richard's tryin' to do what's right by this chile—"

"Bring me his clothes," said Margaret, coldly. "I 'll put them in the drawers myself." She did not mean to be unkind, but she was consumed with jealousy.

But before she had disposed of the things in the various drawers she felt ashamed of this unworthy feeling.

"I am glad it is changed," she said. "It was very—" She could not bring herself to say kind or good or thoughtful. But Mammy Cely supplied the word. "He's mighty good to him, Miss Margaret—ain't he, honey?"

"Yes," said Philip. "He bwings me candy. And every night I go down to meet him. *I* can open the big gate now." And Margaret's heart felt another twinge.

"Mama's brought you something, darling. A dear little baby to hang on the wall. He will be company for you."

It was a Madonna picture—a Bodenhausen with the flowing tresses and the deep, sad eyes. Philip was full of interest in the baby.

"He's thes been havin' a bath," he explained, and Mammy Cely who had little knowledge of art but much of nature, commented, "Jes' look at the creases in the little laig! Aint that natch'el?"

"That is the way mama used to hold you, darling, when you were a dear helpless little baby. I am going to hang it over there in front of the bed so you can see it the first thing in the morning."

"It looks like you, mama," he said thoughtfully. "It 's got the smile of you."

The smile of the Bodenhausen is very sad.

She caught him passionately to her arms.

"Does it look to you like mama? Then every morning when you look at it you must say, 'That is mama and little Philip.'"

"I will," he promised eagerly. "And I'll show it to Unker Wichard."

"Philip! . . Philip!" She felt that he was slipping away from her. "Oh, Mammy Cely, make him remember me!"

"I will, Miss Margaret!" the old woman declared, and to Philip's mystification they were both in tears. "The baby in that picture is white and my baby was black, but somehow the crease in that little laig make me think of Cass. *I* ain't gwineter let him furgit you. No 'm!"

In their interest in the picture and all it stood for they forgot the time till Aunt Dicey announced dinner. Margaret looked at her watch in dismay. The noon train was gone.

"Go on down to dinner, Miss Margaret," insisted Mammy Cely. "Look to me lak you 're cuttin' off yo' nose to spite yo' face. Marse Richard ain't never ast once does you stay. And he ain't gwineter. He jes fix it so you kin and then leave you free. That 's Marse Richard's way. He ain't no talker. Why, honey, fum the day he come and foun' Philip gone he ain't never once mention to me yo' catnippin' that chile. No 'm, he ain't!"

"I don't want any dinner," said Margaret. "I think Mr. De Jarnette's bread would choke me."

"Miss Margaret, honey, that's foolishness! Nothin' ain't gwine choke you after you make up yo' min' to it. Sho's you born, chile, you kin swaller a heap er things in this world you think you can't!"

"I guess that's so," said Margaret. "I used to think —" Then with sudden helplessness— "I don't know

what I think nowadays. Well—I 'll stay." And when she sat down to the cosy meal with Philip across from her and Mammy Cely in beaming attendance, she wondered that she could ever have been so blind as not to see that this gave her an advantage that an hour's stay never could. How much easier to keep herself in Philip's remembrance if she sat thus with him every time she came. . . Surely Richard De Jarnette could not have thought of this.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HEARTS AND SKINS

"MAMMY CELY," said Philip one day after a thoughtful consideration of her face, "what makes you black?"

"I can 't he'p it, honey. God made me that way."

The child looked at her in perplexity.

"Well, what did he do it for?"

There was no answer to this somewhat difficult question, and he continued, "Would n't you rather be white?"

"Co'se I 'd ruther be white," replied Mammy Cely, "but when the Lord made me He was n't askin' 'bout my druthers."

"Oh!" said Philip, wondering what her "druthers" were, but adding after a while in extenuation of the Almighty's ways, "Perhaps he forgot it."

He felt convinced that it was a mistake and it might not be too late yet to remedy it. He determined to incorporate into his nightly prayer for her a petition for a change of color. He was careful never to voice this when he was saying his prayers to her for he wanted it to come to her as a surprise. Every morning his first concern was to see whether the transformation had been wrought in the night. Mammy Cely could not understand his eager look into her face each day and his subsequent look of disappointment. Still he prayed on.

One day a sudden thought came to him and he hunted her up.

"Mammy Cely, I know now what will make you white!"

"Well, 'fo' the Lord!" said Mammy Cely to herself. "He's still harpin' on that same ole string." Then with animation, "What is it, honey? What gwineter work that meracle?"

"You must wash in the blood of a lamb. I 've thes 'membered about it. And it will make you whiter than the snow."

"That 's so!" said the old woman, reverently. "Bless the Lord, I gwineter be white some day!"

She said it so confidently that Philip was still looking for the time to come.

He was a mature child for his years, like most children reared without companions of their own age. To Mr. De Jarnette, unaccustomed as he was to children, it seemed sometimes that the things he said were positively uncanny, when in fact they were but the natural working of a childish brain. Mammy Cely told him what Philip had said about the lamb.

"Where in the world did he get that?" he asked, wonderingly.

"I reckon he had heared the song and thought it meant changin' of the skins 'stidder the hearts."

The child had settled down now in his new home and seldom made any protest. Mammy Cely was very good to him and he followed her about from morning till night. His Uncle Richard had fallen into the habit of having him in the library with him for an hour after dinner, a privilege which Philip greatly valued and did not abuse. He seldom cried now or asked for his mother, appearing to understand instinctively that this

was a subject which his uncle would not like. But he talked freely of "Sous Haven" and the life there, the boats—particularly the "Gwand Wapids"—about the turtles that Mr. Harcourt caught for him, the forts he made him, and the bonfires they had on the beach. Mr. Harcourt was in most of his tales and Richard read a good deal between the lines.

One cool autumn night Philip sat in front of the library fire in his little chair that Richard had brought out for him.

"Unker Wichard, do you ever woast marsh-mallows in your fire?"

"I never have—no."

"I think this would make a dandy beach fire," said Philip, suggestively. "We used to woast marsh-mallows at Sous Haven. We had a big fire on the beach and Mr. Harcourt and me worked hard and hard getting brush for it, and Mr. Harcourt got us some sticks and we woasted 'em in the fire."

"The sticks?"

"No, sir, the marsh-mallows. And Gwamma Pennybacker was there. And—d—Mr. Harcourt chased me wound the fire and we had lots of fun. And—d—then my mama and Mr. Harcourt and Bess singed songs. That 's the way you have a marsh-mallow woast." He sat still for a moment and then said persuasively, "Unker Wichard, s'pose we play that you was Mr. Harcourt, and the big chair was Gwamma Pennybacker, and the little one was Bess, and—Unker Wichard, what could we have for mama? We would most have to have mama."

It was a dangerous subject. "We 'll arrange about that to-morrow," said Richard, hastily, "when we have the marsh-mallows. Now tell me what you 've been doing to-day."

"I 've been keeping off the calves," Philip said promptly, thinking of the latest feat. His mind was easily diverted now.

"Aha! and have you learned to milk?"

"No, sir. I can't make them little things go."

Mr. De Jarnette threw his head back with a laugh that woke the echoes in the silent old room. His nephew surveyed him with mild wonder.

"Aunt Dicey can though," he added.

"How does she do it?"

"Oh, she puts her bucket down and gives old Spot a slap wiv her hand and says, 'stan' over!'—an—d—then she stoops down and—groans—and says, 'Oh—h, my Lord!'—and then—"

"Well?"

"Then she thes pulls the triggers."

Mammy Cely, coming at that moment to take Philip to bed, stopped short in the doorway. She had not heard her Marse Richard laugh like that for many a long year.

Richard found himself smiling over his paper when they were gone. The child said such unexpected things. He recalled the beach scene too. Philip had made it stand out vividly. He hardly thought he could take Mr. Harcourt's place.

In about an hour Mammy Cely returned. Philip was restless and would be satisfied with nothing but his Uncle Richard.

"He 'low he wants to say his prayers to you."

"His prayers?" repeated Mr. De Jarnette in perplexity —there were always some new developments about this child—"what does he want to say his prayers to me for? This is incipient Catholicism."

"Marse Richard, a chile always has to say his prayers to some person. He don't know nothin' 'bout

sayin' 'em to God. God done put the mother of a chile in His place—He knows how chil'n is. And when the mother is tuk away—"

"That will do—" interrupted Mr. De Jarnette, curtly.

"Scuse me, Marse Richard," Mammy Cely returned, humbly, "I did n't mean nothin'—"

"Yes, I know. You did n't mean anything except to say exactly what you wanted to say. And you 've said it now. So go on! . . Tell him I will be there after a little," he added as she left the room.

He felt that it was a weakness in him to go. He had told Philip that he must never send for him again. If he went now he would probably be expected to do so every night, and that he certainly should not do. But for the life of him he could not refuse the child's request. Philip's tyranny was so affectionate, so gentle, the flattery of it was so insidious that it was simply irresistible. Besides,—there was something in what Mammy Cely had said.

"Well, Philip, they tell me you 've got balled up in your devotions," he said, sitting down by the little white bed.

"Sir?"

"Could n't you say your prayers to Mammy Cely?"

"No, sir, I—I can't say 'em very good—to any—black person." In the next room Mammy Cely was chuckling to herself.

He did not seem very particular about saying them to any white person. He talked instead about all the things he could think of to ward off the evil hour of going to sleep. And Richard, his heart strangely soft toward this mite of humanity who wanted him and called for him, defied all the rules of hygiene demanding early hours and let him talk. Mammy Cely was gone, having

petitioned to go down to "Sist' Dicey's" on an errand. It was her policy to leave uncle and child together as much as possible at this hour.

At length Mr. De Jarnette said firmly, "Now, Philip, you really must go to sleep."

"I have to say my pwayers first," said Philip. "I can't *never* go to sleep wivout saying my pwayers." He knew that this was an exercise which could be prolonged indefinitely.

"Well, go on."

"I have to kneel down first."

"Kneel down then."

Philip slipped out of bed and stood before him.

"I have to put my head on somebody's lap."

"Put it against my knee."

"I can't. It has to be somefin' soft."

"Kneel down by the bed then."

"I can't say my pwayers to the bed," Philip said reproachfully. Then, catching sight of a comforter across the bed, he suggested, "Maybe you could make a lap."

To humor him Mr. De Jarnette threw the comforter across his knees, conveniently spread apart. Philip dropped his head upon the manufactured substitute to its immediate undoing.

"My mama's lap don't come to pieces," he remarked critically.

"Wait till I get this thing under my feet," retorted his uncle. "I ought to be able to make a lap that will stand you. Now, sir, I 'm ready for you."

It sounded like a challenge. His nephew, hungry for a romp, made a battering ram of himself and again the lap caved in. When it was reconstructed, Philip put his head down very gently, increasing the pressure with every word.

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pway Thee, Lord, my soul—"

There was a gurgle of laughter down in the comforter.

"Unker Wichard, it's giving way!"

"Philip, you rascal! You 're making it give way. Wait! Now I 've got it!"

With the comforter under both feet he made a lap that could withstand a small boy even, and Philip, recognizing the fact that his romp was over, folded his hands and bowed his head, saying reverently the sweet prayer that so many infant lips have lisped:

"Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.
And this I ask for Jesus' sake,
Amen."

It came into Richard De Jarnette's mind as he sat thus what a ridiculous figure he would cut if any of his business friends should see him at this moment. And yet, strange to say, the situation was not all ludicrous to him. He had never listened to a child's prayers before.

"Good-night, Philip," he said, softly.

Philip raised his head but made no motion to raise.

"I 'm not through yet. I have n't said the 'God bless 'em'."

Then lowering his curly head again he repeated in an entirely conversational tone:

"God bless my mama and bwing her back to her *dear* little boy; and God bless Gwanma Pennybacker; and God

bless Bess and make her a good girl; and God bless Mammy Cely and make her white—be *sure* to make her white, cause she wants to be, and you forgot her druthers when you made her; and God bless Uncle Wichard, and take away his stony heart."

He stopped suddenly, thinking that perhaps he ought not to have said this.

"Where did you hear that, Philip?"

"My mama said so. Unker Wichard, what is a stony heart?"

Richard De Jarnette laughed a rather mirthless laugh, but did not answer the question.

"I suppose your mama has told you a number of pleasant things about me," he said, and his tone had an infusion of bitterness in it. The opinion of this midget was becoming important to him.

"She said she did n't believe that anything would *ever* change your heart; but Gwanma Pennybacker said God could do anything—He could change it—and I must ask Him every night to take away your stony heart and give you a—a—" he was trying very hard to recall the words — "a heart—of—*I* don't know—somefin'—but it was n't stone."

"I am afraid you have two rather tough propositions, Philip,—my heart and Mammy Cely's skin."

"But she's turning, Unker Wichard," the child declared eagerly. "She is! I saw it on the inside of her hands when she was washing. They are 'most white now." Then earnestly, "Unker Wichard, *is* yo' heart stone?"

"I guess my heart is not very different from other men's, Philip, though it would be hard to make some people think so."

"But ever'body don't have the same kind of hearts," the child persisted. He had got up from his knees and

climbed into his uncle's lap. He looked around the room in a half scared way and said almost in a whisper,

"Some people have wolf hearts."

"Nonsense."

"They do! Honest, Unker Wichard!"

"Philip," said his uncle, sternly, "where did you get all that from?"

"Mammy Cely says so. I asked once did she ever have any little child like me, and she said once she did but a man with a wolf heart came and took it away from her. Unker Wichard, do people that take little chilwuns from their mamas—gypsies and ever'body like that—do they always have wolf hearts?"

"I am afraid I am not authority, Philip, on the subject. I have never known anybody with a wolf heart. In fact, there is no such thing. You must not believe all Mammy Cely's stories."

The boy snuggled down closer.

"You have n't any wolf heart, have you, Unker Wichard? Or any stone heart either."

"No. Neither one."

Philip gave a sigh of relief.

"I'm awful glad! 'Cause if it was stone I feel 'most sure it would hurt you sometimes. My heart thes thumps when I run. And if it was a wolf heart maybe you might hurt somebody else—like that other man."

The organ in question was beating rather tumultuously just now. Was it possible that it was giving its impassive owner a few unseen blows? Or was it that the fair head of his nephew was pressing upon it overhard?

"It seems to me you have been having a good deal of heart talk lately," commented Mr. De Jarnette, grimly. "I think I 'll be looking after some of it."

He looked after it the next day by demanding sternly

of Mammy Cely, "What do you mean by telling Philip all this stuff about men with wolf hearts? Don't you know he will believe it? I won't have him frightened with your bug-a-boo stories." Then, thinking of her rooted antipathy to his father, he added, "And I won't have you saying anything to him about the De Jarnettes, either."

Since finding from the child's talk that the Varnums were held up constantly before him, he had felt a growing jealousy for the De Jarnette name.

Mammy Cely replied with her accustomed freedom.

"I ain't tole him 'bout the Jarnettes havin' wolf hearts. *I done kep' it f'um him!* Nobody ever heared me runnin' down my own white folks." Which was true, but she had never acknowledged the family into which she had been adopted as hers, save the one lone descendant of her young mistress—Richard himself. The rest to her were as Scythians and Barbarians. "I suttingly ain't gwine do it to they offspringers."

But Richard was not entirely satisfied.

"Well, don't let me hear of his getting any more such notions in his head."

"Marse Richard, how I gwineter he'p the convolvolutions of that chile's brain? Why, he axed me the other day is you God."

"Asked you what?"

"Axed me 'is you God?' Yes, sir, he did. Hit 's the truth as I 'm standin' here. His ma had tole him there wa 'n 't nobody could help 'em now but God (it was one er them days she looked lak she was gwineter die, she was so low down), and the next day when he come to me and ax me, would n't I *please ma'am* take him to his mama, just for a little while. I says, not knowin' she done put it on the Almighty,—'Honey,' I say, 'that 's fur your

Uncle Richard to say.' And at that he look kinder scared, and he crope up close to me, he did, and he say, sorter low like, 'Mammy Cely, is Uncle Richard God?' . . . So thar now, Marse Richard, you done stan' in the place of his Maker to that chile!"

"Go along to your work," said Richard De Jarnette with unwonted roughness, which Mammy Cely did not resent. In fact it rather pleased her. She looked after him as he strode across the lawn.

"I reckon I'm 'tendin' to it right now," she observed with an astute nod. "He ain't gwineter furgit that. When a person know he stands in the place of God to a *child,* he gwineter walk straight—less'n he 's mons'ous low down."

CHAPTER XXIX

"INASMUCH—"

WEEKS lengthened into months and the days grew short. Philip was still praying for Mammy Cely and his uncle Richard, but the black woman's skin was not yet white and Uncle Richard's heart was unchanged.

The case dragged its slow length along. The law's procrastination is beyond the comprehension of the lay mind. Margaret chafed at it without avail.

"We cannot hurry it," Judge Kirtley told her, "and you would gain nothing if you could. It may be six months before it is settled."

During this enforced inactivity and its consequent restlessness Margaret had gone one day to the Children's Home to execute an errand for Mrs. Pennybacker. When she returned, that observant lady looked up at her and said, quietly,

"What is it, Margaret?"

The girl's face was glowing.

"Aunt Mary, I have seen the most beautiful child! So like Philip."

"At the Home?"

"Yes. The matron brought in a lot of little boys for me to try the mittens on, and this one was the very last. His likeness to Philip struck me so that before I had time to control myself I had caught him up in my

arms and was crying over him. I acted like a baby. But it came over me all at once, what if Philip should ever be cast upon the world like this."

Mrs. Pennybacker wiped her eyes. "What was his name?"

"Louis. Louis Lesseur. I should think he was just about Philip's age. He seemed so sweet and affectionate. I took him to drive."

"Are his parents living?"

"His mother is. It is a very sad case, the matron says. She is a widow, has no friends, and they think has only a few months to live And she is so desperately anxious about what will become of this child. Aunt Mary—"

"Yes, Margaret,—"

"Would it be foolish and Quixotic in me to take him? I have more money than I shall ever need for myself. And Philip has his own. How could I ever use my surplus better than to give this child a chance in life?"

"It might be foolish, Margaret, as the world counts wisdom, but it would be a Christ-like folly. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.'"

Later she said, fearing that she had given undue encouragement, "Margaret, don't do this thing hastily or without sufficient consideration. You would want in the first place to find out all about his antecedents. I should go to see the mother. You don't want a child with bad blood."

"He is not responsible for his blood," Margaret said quickly.

"No, but you would rather it would be good."

"You quoted Christ's words a moment ago. Do you

suppose he ever inquired into people's blood before he helped them?"

"No, I don't. But—" with a wisdom born of a study of the world, not of the Scriptures— "it will pay you to do it. . . Then you ought to find out whether he and Philip like each other. Children have as strong likes and dislikes as grown people."

"It is partly on Philip's account that I want to take him. They would be companions. Besides—oh, Aunt Mary, if the next trial should fail—the house is so frightfully still."

The following day she took little Louis out to see Philip. The two played beautifully together, but Mammy Cely looked at him askance. Her race is always on the lookout for "poor white trash." "No'm, he don't look lak Philip," she said. "He's got the favor of some chile I 've seen, but it ain't Philip."

He went with her one day to see his mother. It brought quick tears to Margaret's eyes to witness the meeting. She came back full of pity for the sick girl.

"Aunt Mary, I don't believe she is as old as I am. So young to die! And she is so gentle and lady-like. She says she has no relatives at all to leave him to. Her husband died when Louis was a year old. And I think she said that neither her husband nor herself had brother or sister. Poor little tot! He is literally alone in the world. And the world so big! . . Aunt Mary, I think I will have to do it."

She rather feared opposition from Judge Kirtley, but somewhat to her surprise he acquiesced in the proposed plan without remonstrance.

"Your money is your own and so is your life," he told her. "You are a woman now, accountable to nobody."

To Mrs. Pennybacker he said afterwards, "I am far

from feeling sure about the outcome of it all. We are doing all we can, but these things are always uncertain. If it should go against her, it will be a good thing for her to have this child."

The next visit to the Home decided her. A lady from Chevy Chase had been there looking for a little boy. She had her eye on Louis Lesseur.

"I told her," reported the matron, "that we had given the refusal of him to another lady."

Margaret's brows came together in a quick frown. This seemed like bargaining for flesh and blood.

"If you could make your decision soon—"

"I will make it now," she said. "I am ready to take him at any time."

But when she got home Mrs. Pennybacker objected strongly to the suddenness of her decision.

"Go and see the mother, Margaret, and insist upon a history of the family. Don't think of taking him without that." Caution is stronger at sixty than at twenty-six.

"I shall take him whatever the family history is! . . Yes, I know it is a responsibility. And so is not taking him. He will soon be a motherless child, and my arms are empty. Aunt Mary," she went on thoughtfully, "I never used to think about these things as I do now, but I cannot see a helpless child these days without my whole heart going out to him. Is it because I am older, or is it Philip?"

"It is Philip, Margaret. This is the way God takes to enlarge our sympathies. The true mother heart can take in more than her own. . . No, I know it, but all women who have borne children are not true mothers, and sometimes the very essence of maternity bubbles up in the heart of one who has never found a mate. . .

And there is another thing: When sorrow sits at our fireside and talks with us, it always leaves us with a quicker ear to catch what she has said to others. I doubt if you could comprehend this poor mother's anxieties if you were not yourself acquainted with grief."

She smiled to herself an hour later as Margaret drove off to the hospital, eager for the interview that would settle the matter.

"For taking her out of herself," she said, "this is almost equal to the whirl of society."

To a little white bed in the hospital ward Margaret went. Upon it a young girl, beautiful even with death's seal upon her face, half lay, half sat, propped up with pillows, her eyes from the contrast with her white face seeming preternaturally bright. There was a feverish eagerness of speech battling with a shortness of breath as she received Margaret, which told its little tale of the flaring up of life's flame, but back of that was a natural vivacity and profuseness of gesture even in her weakness that hinted at Gallic blood.

The ward was a lonely one. Over its portals a practiced eye could read, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." Its inmates went out sometimes, but they never returned. A few beds away an old woman moaned monotonously. She was near enough to have heard their conversation, but the sands of life were running so low that hearing was dulled and curiosity blotted out. It was a safe place to talk if one had anything to say.

Margaret's news that a home had been secured for little Louis was received with manifest relief.

"And is it a good woman that has taken him?" the mother asked, clasping her hands, "Will she be good to him? Will she teach him to be good?"

"I am sure she will try to do both," said Margaret. She felt a disinclination to tell the girl just yet that she herself was the one who was to take him. She would find out from her the story of her life first and then tell her. "But she is anxious to know something more about the child. Would—" she found it difficult to phrase her sentence— "would you be willing to tell this lady, through me, something of your life?"

"My life?" faltered the girl, her eyes growing frightened. "Why—why does she want to know—about my life?"

"Her friends think that she should know something of the little boy's—antecedents." It was Mrs. Pennybacker's word, not hers. "No, do not misunderstand me—" a slight flush had crept into the sick girl's face— "it is not idle curiosity, nor is it that she doubts you. This lady wishes to know enough to satisfy the child when, in after years, he begins to want to know something about his own history "There is—pardon me—I feel that I must ask—there is no blot of any kind upon his name?"

Her own face crimsoned as she put the question, but it was one that Mrs. Pennybacker insisted must be asked, and indeed, as she talked to the sick girl now, she felt herself that she must ask it. A child taken from a Home so often had suspicion cast upon its parentage. The greatest kindness she could do him was to have a plain answer to a direct question—cruel though it seemed.

The sick girl lay very still. When at last she spoke she looked into Margaret's face and answered,

"There is no blot upon his name."

Her breath was labored. She put her hand once to her throat. Then summoning her strength she went on rapidly. "He was born in lawful wedlock. His father

was—a carpenter,—a plain man but an honorable one. He died when Louis was a year old—of pneumonia. We were poor but have always been respectable."

"I am very glad to know this," said Margaret, filled with contrition at having forced her to say it. "I hope you will not misunderstand my asking about it. The friends of this lady are more importunate about this thing than she is, and—"

"Ask me anything you wish," said the woman in a voice strangely quiet and contained. "I was only distressed for breath a moment ago. I can tell you anything now."

"Some other time," said Margaret, rising. She could see that the girl's strength had been overtaxed. "I will go now and see about the little boy's being taken to his new home. And—" the thought of what it must be to the girl to feel that another would take her place rushed over her— "let me promise you for his new mother that she will strive to make him all that you would have him —all that you would have made him had you been spared to him—honorable like his father—pure and true as his mother."

"Oh, madam!" the sick girl cried, and caught her dress. "Oh, madam!"—

But Margaret gently disengaged herself and was gone.

At the office she stopped a moment to ask some questions about Mrs. Lesseur.

"Ah, yes,—poor Rosalie!" the doctor said. She talked longer with him than she intended. It was just a question of time, he said, and not a very long time either. No, it was not tuberculosis, though it seemed something like it. It was a form of Bright's disease. With that malady people sometimes simply faded away. It was

probable that she would go that way. . . Ah, he was very glad to know that a place had been found for the child. She had worried so about that.

As Margaret was stepping into her carriage an attendant came hastily down the steps and spoke to her.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but are you not the lady who has been visiting Mrs. Lesseur in Ward Five?"

"I am."

"The nurse has just been down to say that her patient is very desirous of seeing you a moment before you go,—upon a matter of some moment, I believe."

"Very well. I will go back. Rogers, you may wait."

At the door of the ward the nurse said to her, "You had scarcely gone, madam, before she seemed in great distress and bade me call you back. I think there was something she had forgotten to say. . . Oh, no, it will not hurt her to talk."

And again at the little white bed Margaret sat down. The girl had her eyes closed, and her lips moved as if in prayer or preparation for something she had to say.

"Rosalie," said Margaret, gently, with a sudden impulse using the girl's first name, "was there something you wanted to say to me?"

The girl wrung her hands.

"My poor child, what is it? Talk freely to me as you would to a sister."

"Oh, madam, it breaks my heart to have you speak so tenderly. I—I am not worthy of it. I am not fit to touch your hand. I—I told you falsely when I said there was no blot upon my little Louis's name. Oh, madam, do not turn away from him! He is innocent though he is—the child of shame!"

CHAPTER XXX

"NOT WISELY BUT TOO WELL"

"Oh, it was pitiful!
In the whole city full,
Friend she had none."

THE child of shame! Margaret drew back. She was not prepared for this. Neither was she prepared, when the test came, to take into her home and her life a little waif upon whom this blight had fallen,—so little do we know ourselves.

The girl, her understanding quickened by her anguish of mind, saw the gesture and interpreted it aright.

"You cast him off!" she cried. "Oh, I knew you would. That is why I told you falsely. I did not mean to tell you the truth—ever. But, oh, madam, when you said that she, this lady, would make him honorable as his father had been—would keep him pure as his mother was pure, and true, as both had proved—I felt that it was a curse I had drawn down upon his helpless head. Then, oh, then, I could not keep back the truth. His father was not honorable nor his mother pure."

"Rosalie," said Margaret, calming the girl with the quiet womanliness of her manner, "do you want to tell me your story? Is it this that you have brought me back to hear?"

"Yes. Oh, yes! Let me tell it before you judge me. It is for the boy's sake that I lied; it is for his sake that I will speak the truth now. Oh, it is the truth that I will tell you now!"

"Go on," said Margaret.

"Eight years ago," the sick girl said mournfully, "only eight years, I was little Rosalie Lesseur Beaumont. We were French enough to have the names, though we had always lived in Maryland. My home was in the country. I knew nothing about the city and its wickedness. I was but a child when I met—" she looked up appealingly—"I need not tell you his name?"

"No," said Margaret, hastily, "there is no need that I should know."

The sick girl threw her a quick glance of gratitude. It is a thing most passing strange that when a woman finds herself betrayed, disgraced, branded with shame, and thrust out into that utter darkness from which she knows there can never be recall—even then she holds inviolate the name of him who has brought her low.

"I think if I had had a mother to tell me things it might have been different, but I had lived most of my life with my father, a proud, cold man who loved me, perhaps, but did not let me know it, though he robbed himself of the very necessaries of life that he might educate me. I was to be a teacher. That was his ambition and mine. There was no confidence between us. I could not get close to him as a child does to its mother. . . . I met this man when I was off at school. He was so different from the country boys I had known. He had a way of looking in my eyes and saying things that took my simple, silly heart by storm. I do not offer it in excuse, but madam—I loved him as I had never loved my God! I trusted him as though he *were* my

God. And when he told me that he loved me and wanted me to be his wife, I believed him. He could not marry me openly just now, he said, but if I would go with him to Washington we would be married secretly that very day. I was an honest girl, though a very foolish one, and I insisted on that. . . I trusted him to my undoing. There was a form of marriage. A young man came to our room and murmured something as we stood before him. He did not look like a minister, but I was so dazed and frightened at what I had done that I hardly thought of it then. . . Madam, we were never married. My husband, for so I believed him, told me so one day in a fit of anger—told me brutally."

Margaret gripped the iron rail of the bed.

"That day I took the last cent of money I had and went back to my father's house. It had been a bitter grief to him that I had brought his gray hairs to shame. He shut his door upon me. Oh, madam! . . I begged my way then back to Washington and the man who had betrayed me, and begged him to take me in. What else could I do? . . I lived with him in open sin until he came to me one day and told me that it was all over. He was to be married the next day. He had delayed telling me because he hated to have a scene, but he had decided now to settle down and live a correct life.

"'And I!' I cried, standing up before him, 'what am I to do—I and your child—while you are leading a "correct" life?' He shrugged his shoulders. He would give me money. That was all he could do. Certainly it was as much as I could expect. He had not asked me to come back to him.

"Oh, madam, I was wild!—was wild! I had nowhere to go to hide my shame. My father's house was closed to me—my mother dead. In all the world I had no

friend. It was my fault, my grievous fault. I know that well, and then I have been told it often since,—if I had been a modest girl and staid at home and turned away from all his tales of love and all his promises, this never would have come to me, they 've said. . . . Oh, I have told myself that many times with bitterest tears! . . But, lady, even though she knows it is her fault, her sin, that has brought her to this plight—still, *still,* 'tis hard for a poor girl to feel her pains upon her and know she has no friends!"

Margaret took the woman's thin, trembling hand between her two strong ones and held it close.

"It *is* hard," she said with infinite gentleness, "hard and very pitiful. The world is full of hard things for women."

The sick girl looked up with a startled expression. "Surely, sin with its sorrows has not touched you?"

"My poor girl, the sorrows that come from sin do not stop with the sinning. But go on with your story," said Margaret.

"Oh, yes. I was telling you why I was so desperate that day; I thought you would not understand. I think a madness was in my blood. You see, it was very hard, and I was so young I could not see the justice of it. I had been his toy—his plaything—and now, broken and useless, he cast me into the mire of the street, while he—and lady, my sin had been his sin too—to-morrow he would marry a pure girl, such as I had been, and the world would look on and wish him joy and think it right. . . .

"He had not told me where the marriage was to be, nor who the girl was. But the next morning I went to his home and waited in a place near by for him to come out. I did not mean to speak to him again—only to

follow him. For hours I waited. I was faint from lack of food, but I was afraid to leave the spot for fear of missing him. At last a gentleman came out and drove off, and then the man I loved and hated. A carriage was waiting and he was driven away. I ran after it. I would have hired a cab only I had no money. I could not run so very fast, you know, and sometimes I almost stumbled and fell—then caught myself and hurried on. And though it gained on me I kept my eye on the carriage. At sixteenth street it turned south toward the Square, and then I knew it was going to St. John's."

"St. John's!"

"Yes. You know the place? It is near Lafayette Square—the old church with the columns in front. When I got there, out of breath and almost dead from running, a crowd was on the sidewalk and even out into the street waiting for the bridal party to come out. They would have crowded around the very door but that policemen kept them back. I elbowed my way through them and was so desperate and violent that they made way for me, thinking I was some crazy woman—as indeed I almost think myself I was.

"As I reached the door a policeman caught me by the arm, but I jerked away and cried, 'I *will* go in! He is my husband—mine!' And then I beat upon the door before they could stop me and screamed again, 'He is my husband!' At that they overpowered me and dragged me off—somewhere—I don't know—to the station, I believe. That night my baby was born."

"How old is your child?" asked Margaret, her voice so strained and hard that the sick woman looked up surprised.

"Six years. Have I tired you with my story? I did not mean to be so long."

"Go on. It interests me deeply," answered Margaret, with irony unnoticed by the sick woman. "I am learning that we all are bound up in one another's woes—and wickedness." After a moment she asked with a tinge of bitterness, "And was no voice lifted to save this girl?"

"I cannot tell. I never saw her—do not know her name or where she lived. But this I know; that in time he would be false to her as he was false to me. It was not in him to be—"

"Let us not talk of him," said Margaret, hastily. "Tell me about yourself? How did you live?"

"Oh, madam, ask me anything but that! 'T would break my heart to tell that tale and yours to hear it. How can a poor girl live who has a baby in her arms and not a friend? . . I went from door to door asking for work. It was the same old story everywhere I went. They looked at me—a girl of seventeen—and at the child—and then they shook their heads and closed the door.

"One day when I was desperate I got a piece of crepe and put it on my hat and *lied.* I said my husband had been killed, and would they give a poor girl work? The child was good—he seldom cried, I told them—and I would work at night and have no afternoon off to make up for his being there. If only they would try me! Then they asked me questions—what was my husband's name? Where was he killed? and how?—simple, natural questions, all of them, I know now, but then they seemed traps to catch me, and I grew confused and tripped myself, and then—they shook their heads, just as before, and shut the door."

"Did you never try anything but housework?"

"Oh, yes, I tried the others first. They would not have

me in the stores. They found out. Somehow I could not help their finding out. I don't know how they did it, but they did. There was always somebody to tell."

"And could you get no sewing to do?"

"I had never been taught to sew. I had been in school until I met him. It was the plan always that I should be a teacher. Of course I could not even think of that —afterwards."

Margaret's lips tightened.

"Why did you not go to him, this man," she cried with sudden vehemence, "and demand support for your child?"

"I did at last. In my fierce anger that day I had said I never would—that I would starve in the streets before I would take a penny from his hands. . . But, madam, *then* I did not know how hard 't would be to starve with a baby at your breast,—a helpless baby growing thinner day by day for lack of mother's milk that had dried up because she had no food! It is not so hard—this starving—for one's self, when you get used to the crusts and refuse from the market; but when your child, your baby, fades away, and has not strength to cry, and gets that pitiful, pinched look, and you realize that it too is starving—oh, madam, then your pride is gone! . . . I went to him and begged food for his child. He gave me money for awhile, and then he went away."

"Went away and left you helpless," breathed Margaret.

"He left me desperate! 'T was then I had my hardest fight. Oh, madam, I sometimes wonder if good women know—the sheltered, favored ones who will not have us in their homes after our one false step, how hard it is then for us to keep from going down. They surely cannot know!—how we are tempted by our poverty and want of work. . . You see there are so many pit-

falls for our feet! Oh, there are hands held out!—the hands that drag us down! And doors that open—but they are the gates of hell!"

She sank back exhausted. But after a moment she went on:

"Madam, I was often hungry in those days,—was oftener cold,—and sometimes had not where to lay my head; but I swear to you I kept myself from evil for my child, and *I kept my child*. Then one day a fever fell upon me, and some ladies came and took my baby to the Children's Home and me to the hospital. It was typhoid fever, caused by unsanitary food the doctor said (you see when one is starving she cannot stop to ask if this or that is sanitary, so long as it is food), and for many weeks I lay delirious.

"I was just ready to be discharged from the hospital when one day I read in the paper that this man had come back to Washington. I laid the paper down and thought long and hard. I knew that he was wealthy—had money that he could not use, 't was said. I determined to go to him and ask him once for all to settle on me or his child a sum sufficient to support us in a humble way—oh, a *very* humble way—only so that I could have my baby with me and be sure of bread. You do not think that was too much to ask?"

"No! no!"

"I went straight to him from the hospital. I think—perhaps—I was not quite myself, though I seemed well. The doctor here tells me (I have asked him since) that often typhoid leaves a patient for months in a bewildered state of mind—'confusional insanity' I think they call it—and—I do not know—but I have thought that—perhaps—perhaps it was—"

Her eyes were fixed on vacancy, a wistful troubled

look in them, as if, forgetful of her auditor, she were laboring upon some unsolved problem.

"You found him in?" asked Margaret, gently recalling her.

"Oh, yes—yes. I found him in. He was sitting at his desk—"

She stopped abruptly. Margaret was leaning forward, one hand clutching the rail of the iron bed, the other clenched in her lap.

"Go on," she said hoarsely.

The sick woman looked at her and a swift change passed over her face, a look almost of veiled cunning coming into it.

"He would do nothing for me," she resumed in a commonplace voice. "I never saw him again—he died soon afterwards, I heard." The subject seemed finished.

"Just one thing more," Margaret's lips were dry. She hardly knew her own voice. "Did—did he die a natural death or by violence?"

For just a moment the woman hesitated. It was as if she were weighing her words. Then she said quietly, "He died a natural death."

Margaret drew a long, long breath.

"Tell me something about your little boy," she said almost lightly.

A tenderness came into the woman's wan face at mention of him.

"I named him Louis—Louis Lesseur. That was my mother's name, and Louis is for my little brother that died. I could not give him even my own name—my father was so bitter—but these two were dead."

"And is he very dear to you—your little son?"

"Dear? O, madam, he is the very breath of life to me."

"And yet you cannot have him with you?"

"No." She said it very patiently. "The rules of both Hospital and Home forbid. But sometimes they bring him to me for a little while."

As the sad story to which she had listened had progressed, a determination had been taking form in Margaret De Jarnette's mind.

She bent over now and speaking slowly that the sick woman might take in her words, said,

"And would it make you very happy if you could have him all the time? If you could lie upon a couch in some pleasant, sunny room—a quiet house, we 'll say, where you would not be disturbed—could have your little Louis in this room with you every day—to talk to you and lean against you as he talks—to have his playthings on the floor and play that you and he were this and that—perhaps sometimes when you were very well even to have his crib bed in your room, and tuck him in, and watch him go to sleep—could have his goodnight kiss and hear him say his prayers—" she drew the picture with the swift, sure strokes that mothers know—"if you could have all this and know that it would last until some night you 'd fall asleep to waken on your mother's breast,—would it make you very happy?"

The woman looked at her with parted lips and shining eyes.

"Oh, madam!—It would be heaven!"

"Then enter into paradise," Margaret said softly.

"You mean—" the sick girl asked, incredulously.

"I mean that I am going to take you to my home if you will go, and let you have your little Louis with you there."

The woman caught her hand and kissed it passionately. Then with quick alarm she asked, "But madam—the

lady? Would she be willing for him to come to me?"

Margaret smiled. "She will be willing."

Another fear assailed the mother.

"Perhaps she will not want to take him when she knows his mother's sin."

"She will hold him all the more tenderly because of what his mother has suffered."

"Ah! is she then so good? so kind?"

"She is not very good," said Margaret, smiling down at her, "but to your boy she promises she will never be anything but kind. My poor girl, will you trust her?"

A sudden light broke upon the sick woman.

"You?" she cried. "You?—who heard it all, and took my hand—and understood? You?"

A look of awe and then of peace ineffable stole over her face.

"Oh, madam! *now* I know God has forgiven me!"

CHAPTER XXXI

A WOMAN'S CRUSADE

MARGARET'S action in taking a dying woman into her home that she might give her the blessedness of being with her child while life lasted excited little comment. Indeed it was known to but few persons. Social life in the capital city is an unstable thing. Congressional circles change; army and navy people move away; there are the "ins" and the "outs" with every administration; and fortunes rise and fall there as elsewhere. Margaret found her world greatly narrowed when she came back to Washington after years of absence. Besides, the few friends who were closest to her had become accustomed now to expect the unusual. It is the beauty of an unconventional life which keeps within the proprieties that when one has made it definitely clear that she intends to follow her own lead she finds herself by that act lifted above the realm of harassing criticism.

Margaret had not felt it necessary to take even her own small world into her confidence.

"We won't say anything to Maria about it," advised Mrs. Pennybacker. "She would n't understand it, and besides, what Maria knows might just as well be put in the evening papers. She gives of her knowledge without stint."

The servants knew Mrs. Lesseur as a sick friend of Mrs. De Jarnette's—Bess, as an unfortunate woman who had excited Margaret's sympathies because of her friendless, widowed condition.

"That is enough for any young girl to know," said Mrs. Pennybacker, to whom Margaret had told the whole story. "We 'll tell Mr. Harcourt the same."

Judge Kirtley was a little inclined to question the wisdom of Margaret's burdening herself with a dying woman, but Mrs. Pennybacker had said to him impressively, "Judge Kirtley, the time has come when you and I may well 'put off the shoes from off our feet for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.' The Lord is leading Margaret in ways we do not know."

And the Judge said no more. Watching the girl closely he halfway thought it was true.

Two rooms in the third story where she could be quiet and have the sunlight were prepared for Rosalie Lesseur. There she and a discreet nurse were installed, and there she lay basking in the sunshine of her child's presence and the knowledge that all was well. She had not even questioned them about whose house she was entering. It was enough that it was her Chamber of Peace.

It happened that the day after she was settled here Bess came into the room with a big bunch of yellow daisies which she laid in Margaret's lap.

"For 'Mrs. Osborne,' with Mr. Harcourt's compliments," she said, " 'and will she tell him what they recall to her?' "

"Give him 'Mrs. Osborne's' thanks," said Margaret, smiling at his message, "and tell him they remind her strikingly of the black-eyed Susans of South Haven."

From this Rosalie Lesseur naturally supposed that her

benefactress was Mrs. Osborne. She called her so once to the nurse, who had also seen the flowers presented, and that judicious person, who was taciturn by nature and prudent by profession, did not see fit to undeceive her. Perhaps Mrs. De Jarnette had some reason for wishing to be known as Mrs. Osborne. It was no part of her business to talk. And since Rosalie with a trace of inherited Frenchiness always addressed Margaret as "Madam," or "lady,"—sometimes "sweet lady," "dear lady," her misapprehension in regard to the name was never discovered.

Everything that could be done for the sick girl's comfort was done. The child came in and out at will. He was a sweet, lovable boy, gentle like his mother and easily led. When the two children were together, it was always Philip that took the lead. Margaret took him often with her in her visits to Elmhurst, thinking it was well for Philip to have intercourse with other children. It added greatly to the happiness of both, but Mammy Cely was never quite reconciled to the intimacy. "You can't never tell nothin' 'bout these here pick-up chil'n," she would say.

Rosalie was very responsive to kindness, never having had a surfeit of it, and was so grateful for everything done for her that it was easy to keep on doing. Margaret fell into the habit of being much with her, reading to her, sitting beside her with her sewing, talking sometimes but often simply giving her the comfort of her presence, and receiving—ah, well! nobody can give of herself as Margaret gave and not receive in return good measure pressed down and running over. Mrs. Pennybacker, too, was kind and motherly. Her hand often rested on the girl's forehead with the line on her lips unspoken—

"She was so young, and then she had no mother."

Bess and the little boy were the greatest friends and took long walks together, often going to the Zoo, because the child, of course, was fond of seeing the animals, and Bess was but another child. Mr. Harcourt frequently accompanied them upon these tramps "to take care of the children" he said. But with the responsibility of the little boy upon her, Bess really seemed quite womanly, looking after him with a little assumption of motherliness that was extremely pretty, John Harcourt used to think. He watched her while she watched the animals.

In all these weeks there was never a reference to Rosalie's past.

"That page is turned, Rosalie," Margaret had told her one day when she made some depreciating reference to herself. "Let us never speak of it again." She said it with a gentle firmness that was final, and from that hour Rosalie Lesseur looked at her with worshipful eyes. The creature comforts with which she was surrounded, the material kindness which had been showered upon her, the blessedness of again having her child in her arms,—all these were enough to awaken deepest gratitude. But what could be said of a magnanimity, a Christ-like compassion which blotted out her transgressions and loved her freely? It is related of the great-hearted nurse of the Crimea that the sick soldiers turned to kiss her shadow as it passed. Rosalie could have fallen at Margaret's feet and kissed the hem of her garment, but that she felt her unworthiness.

One afternoon they were sitting in her room, Mrs.

Pennybacker and Margaret doing the talking and the sick girl listening. She never talked much herself, but she liked to hear them. She was feeling unusually bright that day, and looked actually happy, for the conversation was about Philip and Louis and the rapidly approaching Christmas. It almost seemed that God's peace was settling upon her face.

"We will have a little Christmas-tree for Louis in here," Margaret was saying. Just then a servant appeared at the door with a card.

"A lady to see Mrs. De Jarnette."

Margaret looked at the card.

"'Mrs. Mary S. Belden.' What in the world does she want, I wonder. You are sure she asked for me?"

"Yes, madam, she distinctly said Mrs. De Jarnette."

"Tell her I will be down at once."

"Who is Mrs. Mary S. Belden?" asked Mrs. Pennybacker.

"A lady who is quite prominent here in club circles—women's clubs, I mean. I used to know her slightly, but I have n't seen her since I 've been back."

"Oh, she probably wants to get you into some club. And, Margaret, suppose you join. I think it would be very pleasant for you. It gives one an interest outside her own life."

Mrs. Pennybacker had followed Margaret to the door. When she returned Rosalie had slipped from the pillows, and was lying in a dead faint. The nurse was hastily summoned and restoratives applied.

"Oh," she said faintly as consciousness came back, "if I could have gone then!"

"It was only a sinking spell," the nurse said soothingly, adding to Mrs. Pennybacker in an aside, "She is liable to have them at any time now."

"Well, what did Mrs. Mary S. Belden want?" It was in the library a half hour later. "To secure you for her club?"

"No," said Margaret, "she came to tell me of a meeting to be held the last of the week in the interest of some 'movement' or other and to see if she could secure my co-operation."

"What movement?"

"Oh, I don't know. I declined so promptly that she had no chance to tell me. I think I offended her, but I can't help it. I have no patience with all these women's meetings."

Mrs. Pennybacker pursed her lips, but said nothing.

Everybody must have observed from his own experience that when a new word or thought comes to us with sufficient force to make an impression, we invariably run across that word or thought again within twenty-four hours, and so often thereafter that the wonder arises how we could have missed it all this time. Taking up a *Post* the day after Mrs. Belden's call, Margaret saw a notice of a meeting to be addressed by Mrs. Greuze on a subject of great moment to women. Walking down F Street that afternoon with Bess she overheard two well-dressed ladies discussing it—at least she supposed it was that. One of them asked, "Are you going to the meeting?"

"Yes," the other replied, "it was made very clear to us at the Pro Re Nata that we ought to do whatever we could to help the movement along. You see—" they had passed and Margaret missed the rest. Their destination was a milliner's establishment,—their object a winter hat for Bess.

The milliner's girl was trying it on her, and Bess perking her head this way and that like a bird and turning it up, down, and around to find a possible objection,

listening meanwhile to an occasional suggestion from Margaret and a succession of compliments from the saleswoman, when Margaret's ear caught a fragment that floated to her from the other side of the store.

"I do hope, ladies," the proprietor, a woman, was saying earnestly, "that you will give it the support of your presence at least. The movement is a most important one for women in trade. The present laws—"

"Margaret, how is this? Would n't you like this feather tipped a little more?"

Margaret wanted to hear what it was about the laws, but when the question of the feather was decided the ladies were gone. . . How could the suffrage movement help a milliner?

The thing pursued her even after she got home. Mrs. Kirtley came in toward night for a call, and said in the course of the conversation, "Margaret, do you know anything about this movement the women are interesting themselves in so much just now? Mrs. Delamere was telling me about it yesterday, but it was just as I was getting off the cars and she had n't time to explain it to me. She urged me to go to the meeting to-morrow evening—said I would find out all about it then. Have you heard anything about it?"

"Yes," said Margaret, with some hesitation, "I *have* heard of it, but I really don't know what it is. I have an idea that it is the suffrage movement. Don't you think so?"

"*No,* indeed! Mrs. Delamere would have nothing to do with that, I am sure, and she told me to drum up everybody I could. Are you going?"

"Yes, I think I shall. My curiosity is a little aroused now to see what the movement really is."

Margaret was trying to recall something she heard Judge Kirtley say one day about somebody—she was thinking it was the suffragists—prodding the legislatures up to a change of defective laws. She gave a faint sigh. If only they would spend their time and energies on laws affecting flesh and blood instead of forever harping upon property rights and suffrage!

She felt heavy-hearted to-day. Judge Kirtley had just told her that there had been a postponement of the case. It was not likely to come to trial for months yet. The docket was so full that it was impossible to tell when her case would be reached. They could only be patient and wait. She felt that she could not be patient any longer. Her heart was sick with waiting. It would soon be Christmas and she could not even have the child with her then. That was a sore spot. She had written to Mr. De Jarnette, asking if Philip might not be allowed to come to her house for the holidays. It did not seem to her that she could bear it to spend that season which was so much to both of them without him. She had planned that Philip and Louis should hang up their stockings side by side in Rosalie's room, and in the evening have their Christmas tree there.

Mr. De Jarnette had replied briefly but courteously that he was sorry not to grant her request, but for reasons unnecessary to state, it seemed best that Philip should spend the holidays at Elmhurst. He trusted that she would feel at liberty to come to him there for the day if she so desired.

She tore the letter into bits, furious at him for refusing her request and at herself for making it. Why had she humiliated herself to ask a favor at his hands? Oh, when would it all be over? she thought with a sick longing for her boy. When would she be freed from this

man's iron hand? Her heart was sending up the old, old cry, "How long, O Lord! how long!"

"Margaret," said Mrs. Pennybacker the night of the meeting, dropping a lump of sugar into her coffee as she spoke, "I can tell you the straight of this thing now. While I was over at Maria's this afternoon she had a call from a Mrs. Slyter who had come to enlist her in it. I thought she was on rather a cold trail, but I did not think it necessary to tell her so."

"Mrs. Slyter?" exclaimed Margaret, wonderingly, "Why, Mrs. Slyter is a society woman. Of what interest could it be to her?"

"I don't know, but it has certainly enlisted her."

"What did Mrs. Slyter have to say about it?"

"She says it is a concerted effort on the part of the women's clubs of the District to have some radical changes made in the laws relating to women. This lecture is to call attention to the necessity for such changes."

"In other words, the speaker is going to tell the women what their wrongs are. They can 't have been very hard hit if they don't know without being told," said Margaret, a little scornfully.

The fact that people of all sorts and conditions were taking an interest in the gathering of the evening aroused Margaret's curiosity in regard to it, and it cannot be denied that it inclined her to look upon a woman's meeting with more toleration than she had ever supposed she could feel. As Mrs. Pennybacker had said, they certainly must be in earnest, and earnestness always commands respect even if the zeal it induces is ill-judged. She would try to go with an unbiased mind.

But when they entered the hall and she saw a woman speaker on the platform, her inherited conservatism as-

serted itself. It seemed a bold thing for a woman to do. She felt that she was doing almost a disreputable thing to come here. Her father would not have approved of it, she was sure. He had always felt that home was the woman's kingdom. She could almost hear him now saying:

"Queens you must always be; queens to your lovers; queens to your husbands and your sons; queens of higher mystery to the world beyond, which bows itself, and will forever bow, before the myrtle crown, and the stainless scepter, of womanhood."

Even though the speaker was clothed in soft raiment and did not seem at all masculine, she could not rid herself of the feeling that it was not a womanly thing for her to be here on this platform. Ruskin was right when he said:

"But alas! you are too often idle and careless queens, grasping at majesty in the least things, while you abdicate it in the greatest."

When Mrs. Greuze began to speak it was in no receptive mood that Margaret listened, but rather in a spirit of impatient criticism. The thing seemed so far apart from life.

After a while she found herself wondering with rather a curious interest what the speaker would say next, but with no spark struck between them. Mrs. Greuze was telling of the laws of the District in regard to married women and their property rights, their inability to buy, to sell, and to hold in their own right. Mrs. Pennybacker was listening intently.

"That is as true as Gospel!" she whispered in assent to some assertion that struck her as specially forcible. "I 've known a hundred cases in Missouri where a woman's property was simply absorbed by her husband

when she was married and if she wanted five dollars to give to the missionary cause in after years she had to go to him for it, and he always thought he was making her a present of it!"

Margaret smiled with but languid interest. It might be that a man could by law claim his wife's wages and get them; that a woman was not entitled legally even tc the clothes she wore;—that was all very hard, but the world was full of hard things, and why should she burden herself with other people's sorrows and wrongs when she was powerless to remedy them? She had enough of her own. . . What if women had not the right to sue or be sued? This might be important in the abstract—to the people who theorized—but it all seemed far away and irrelevant. These things must touch very few people. She looked at her watch, thinking that Philip had been in bed two hours now perhaps. She would charge Mammy Cely to be very regular about his hours, and not let him—

"And if it is true that woman has an inherent right to the money she has earned, to the property she has inherited, to the home she has labored with heart and hand to make, what shall we say of her right to the child she has borne?"

Margaret sat up straight, with nerves and muscles tense. As a button pressed a thousand miles away starts all the ponderous machinery, so had this sentence been the electric spark to put her in instant touch with the speaker and her subject. Heart, soul, and mind were alert now.

"And yet—there are laws in this District which impliedly deny that a mother has an equal right with the father to those children. More than this, there are laws which give that father a right to will away from her

her child. Nay, more even than that,—there are laws which give him the power to will away her *unborn* child! Do you say that our statutes need no revision when this is where they place women in the closing years of our vaunted nineteenth-century civilization? . . You do not believe that this is true? Study the laws. Find out for yourselves. Do not take my word for it. But let me tell you in verification of my statement that there is pending even now in the Courts of this District just such a case. A father willed away his child from its mother, and one court has sustained the will. . . You have not known of this? . . My friend, that is because it has not touched you."

Margaret was staring at her with fascinated eyes. How had this woman known? Was it her cause they were espousing? Was this the touch of nature that made the whole world kin? She heard as in a dream Mrs. Greuze's closing words.

"We do all honor in this land of ours to the brave men who have risked their lives for their country; the soldier's claim to a nation's gratitude is sung everywhere, —sometimes not over-modestly. In Washington we talk of it not in empty words, but in marble, stone, and bronze. We build our Soldiers' Home for the disabled veterans; we employ armies of men for the disbursement of the millions we pour willingly at their feet; when we can do no more we lay them to rest in our beautiful city of the dead and deck their graves with laurel. Is this all? Nay, we have made the Nation's capital a monumental city, raising memorials on every hand 'lest we forget.' And we do well to honor them.

"But after all, how long does a battle last or a war, even though it be a fratricidal conflict kept up until the flower of the land is cut down and the rivers run red

with blood? Not long. Not long as God counts time. But oh, my friends, there is somewhere a brave woman fighting the battle of maternity in every minute of time, and has been since the world began, and they always *have* met it and always *will* meet it gallantly and gladly. They have not marched into battle with the pomp and panoply of war—with flags flying, drums beating, and the cheers of comrades in their ears. Their fight has been single-handed, in the stillness of the night watches and in the darkened chamber. But *never a soldier among them but has known that she faced death.*

"And this great army of mothers all over the world, in all the ages past and to come, ask no pensions, crave no honors, expect not even to have written over their modest tombs, 'Here lies one who has fought a good fight.' All they ask is the same rights to children, property, and persons that their husbands and fathers have always enjoyed."

When the lecture was over Margaret went straight to the speaker.

"I am one the law has touched," she said. "Let me help."

CHAPTER XXXII

MARGARET ENLISTS

THE next day was the time for Margaret's visit to Philip. Not once in all these months had she failed him. Not once had the dawn of that day come without bringing first of all to her mind the thought, "To-day I shall see him."

This morning, however, her waking thought was not of her child, but of the cause which she longed so passionately to help. She had made an engagement the night before to meet Mrs. Greuze at her rooms at ten. She would postpone her visit to Elmhurst till afternoon.

"That 's the way it goes," remarked Mrs. Pennybacker caustically as Margaret, dressed for the street, announced this plan. "As soon as the poison of public life gets into a woman's veins, it appears first of all in her neglect of her children. At least that 's what they say."

"I am not neglecting my child," Margaret declared indignantly. "I am only trying to find out what I can do to help him. I never had Philip's good more at heart than I have this minute."

"Oh, Margaret, you 've got it—bad!"

But the girl was too much in earnest to respond to Mrs. Pennybacker's bantering.

"You want to know what was the very beginning of the movement, you say?" said Mrs. Greuze, as she and Mar-

garet sat together in her well-appointed rooms. "Well, if this ever grows to an oak, Mrs. De Jarnette, it will have come from a very small acorn. The people who started it had not the least idea of its ever reaching the proportions of a bill before Congress, I assure you, for I was in at the start. You see, a few of us last year undertook the study of civics as applied to local affairs. We have found many laws inimical to women—laws of whose existence most of those ladies had never dreamed."

"Judge Kirtley used to say to me," said Margaret, the remark coming back to her with new force, "that people seldom know much about the laws under which they live until they are touched by them."

"That 's it exactly. We found laws in force here in this District that we were amazed to know were in existence. That is to say, most of the women knew nothing about them. A few whose lives or work had brought them into contact with law knew. To the rest they were a revelation. Well, the need of the revision of these laws was laid before the Federation of Women's Clubs of the District, and they at once took it up. Our plan is this: We want to get a bill through Congress to amend the laws of the District of Columbia as to married women, to make parents (the mother equally with the father), the natural guardians of their children, and for other purposes of like character. We hope to have the bill introduced early in the session. And then every woman in the City of Washington who is interested in its success must go to work."

"How?" cried Margaret. "Tell me how. I am ready and anxious to work if I only knew what to do."

"In the first place we have to make friends for this bill. Any woman who has influence with any member of the Senate must use it now. I say Senate because it is

to be introduced there. It will go to the House later. We want if possible to get personal pledges from every Senator that he will vote for this bill when it comes up. Do you know anybody in the Senate? Your case is so directly in point that it ought to make you a powerful advocate."

"Yes, I have had a number of acquaintances in the Senate. My father was thrown much with public men and was in the habit of having them frequently at his home."

"Then certainly the position in which the present laws have placed his orphaned daughter will appeal to them. Think up every one, my dear, that you could possibly reach. This movement represents five thousand women and to make it a success everybody that can do anything must go to work."

"And these women are doing all this in order to secure a mother's right to her child!" ejaculated Margaret, with a growing sense of her own narrowness of vision.

"Why, bless you, no!" returned Mrs. Greuze. "That is only one item in the bill that we shall present. You could n't get a bill through on that one point alone. People can't be depended upon to work unless their own personal interests are concerned. It is a selfish world, my dear."

From Mrs. Greuze Margaret went straight to Mrs. Belden.

"I thought you did not understand," that lady said. "But now that you do we will put our shoulders to the wheel together." There was inspiration in the ring of her voice.

"Yes, as Mrs. Greuze has told you," she went on, "our plan is to canvass the Senate thoroughly and systematically, not in any aggressive way that would antagonize

—we are not trying to exploit ourselves—but with a quiet persistency that will secure the votes. I am sure you can be of great service to us just here."

"Oh, I wish I could be!" cried Margaret.

"You see your case illustrates so perfectly the atrocious medieval character of some of our laws. Your story will only have to be told to furnish the argument. They cannot say to you as they have said to us, 'Oh, these laws are a dead letter.' In you, my child, we have a living witness to the fact that they are *not* a dead letter. Soon after the Christmas recess I hope to have the pleasure of taking you with me to call on Senator Southard, whom we are specially anxious to gain."

"I remember him," said Margaret. "I have heard my father speak of him."

"Yes. Perhaps other names will come to you in connection with your father."

They did. For six years she had put the Senate, the House, and the whole body politic out of view. They had all been obscured by one small child. Now they suddenly assumed gigantic proportions. When she reached the carriage her directions to the coachman surprised him.

"To the Capitol," she said.

An overwhelming desire was upon her to enter the Senate Chamber again and look that august body over. Was there anybody there now that she would know? Anybody that would know her?

As she went into the "ladies' gallery" a tourist in the front row with a guidebook in her hand rose to go. Margaret slipped into the vacated seat and leaned over the rail. It was the first time she had been there since she used to come with her father. Then she always sat in the "reserved gallery."

There were very few members present. A Senator from the West was making a speech on irrigation to which nobody seemed to be paying any attention, not even "Mr. President," whom he was so earnestly apostrophizing. As Margaret looked at him more closely she perceived that it was a man she had once met at Judge Kirtley's. She distinctly remembered the occasion and Judge Kirtley's saying of him afterwards that he was a "fair-minded" man. It had seemed to her then faint praise,—now fair-mindedness seemed a cardinal virtue in a Senator. Perhaps she could reach him through Judge Kirtley. . . And there was Senator Vest, of Missouri. Why, was it possible that he was still here? She remembered his coming to her father's house when she was a young girl—oh, so many years ago! He was one of her father's friends. She had heard him tell often of Senator Vest's eulogy of the dog which by its touching eloquence brought instantly a verdict against its slayer. And there on the other side was Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, who had once written a plea from the birds to be presented to the legislature asking protection. Surely if the hearts of these men were open to dumb animals and the fowls of the air, they would not be shut to a mother's cry!

Finally the Senator who felt that in storage reservoirs for the western waters lay the safety of the country, sat down, gathered up his papers, and looked around blankly at the empty seats, chastened, perhaps, but without doubt reflecting that his great effort would reach the eyes of his constituents even though the ears of his colleagues had failed him.

And now a new man was on the floor. The comatose Senate seemed suddenly to have regained consciousness. People leaned over the railings and craned their

necks to see what was happening below. The Senators were dropping in from every quarter. Employees were lining up around the room. The mysterious button which announces a speaker worth hearing or a question of moment had evidently been pressed. So far as Margaret was concerned, neither the man nor the measure was of the least importance. The subject might have been the condition of Boribooligha for all she could tell about it. To her it was an occasion to look into the faces of men who had power to change a law, nothing more. The Senate is not subject to the fluctuations of the House. As she looked down upon them she was surprised to see how many she knew, and every familiar face gave her an added sense of potentiality. If only she knew how to begin!

As she passed through the corridor going home she ran into a florid little man apparently hurrying to reach the chamber before the speech was ended.

"I beg your pardon, madam! I did n't observe—why, bless my soul! Is n't this little Maggie Varnum?" He had her by the hand. "My old friend's daughter!"

"Senator Dalgleish!" cried Margaret with such genuine delight that the little man beamed, Senator though he was. It is very charming for rotund middle age to find itself a source of pleasure to youthful grace and beauty. "How glad I am to see you again!"

"It has been a long, long time, has it not?—time for many things to happen." He sobered suddenly. "Your dear father—yes, yes! Well, it comes to us all." Then cheerfully, "You keep your girlish looks. Let me—see. You—are married?"

"Yes," Margaret said slowly,—"and widowed."

"Ah, very sad! very sad indeed!" The Senator shook

his head several times, at a loss for appropriate words. These chance meetings after years develop such uncomfortable topics.

"Is Mrs. Dalgleish with you?" Margaret made no bid for his sympathy.

"No. She will be up after the holiday recess. In the meantime I am playing bachelor at the Raleigh. Don't like it either. There 's nothing like home for an old fellow like me."

"Come out and dine with me to-morrow night," suggested Margaret, with a sudden inspiration. "I will give you a home-dinner and an old-fashioned Varnum welcome."

"Good! I 'll do it. Seven, you say? All right. And the place?"

Margaret handed him her card. As she left him he looked at it. "H—m. . . De Jarnette. Queer name. Seems as if I had heard it before. De Jarnette. . . . Well, by George, she 's a mighty handsome widow!"

"To the B. and O., ma'am?"

Margaret glanced at her watch. "No,—home. It is too late now for Elmhurst."

In the carriage she leaned back, thinking not so much of Philip and his disappointment as of this chance meeting and the opportunity it threw in her way. It was better to have found this man than to have seen Philip. She was launched now, actually launched, and that almost without intention. The Fates certainly had favored her. With Senator Dalgleish at her own fireside, anxious to hear the story of her life and how she had fared, it ought not to be hard to enlist his sympathies. He was always a warm-hearted little man. It was a distinct ad-

vantage to be able to tell that story in her own home when he had been a guest at her board. . . And if this should prove advantageous with one—

Her course seemed opening up before her. She leaned back in the carriage bowling up Massachusetts Avenue and deliberately counted her assets. She had a beautiful home and means to open it whenever there was anything to gain by doing so—she was opening it to-morrow for a distinct purpose. Then she had social position, or at least she *had* had, and that of a kind that would make its recovery an easy thing—Marie Van Dorn had been right about that. Well, social standing and wealth were good things, but they were not all, nor were they the things she chiefly relied upon. She had discovered that day in looking the Senate over that she was the possessor of a number of inherited friendships with those who sat in the seats of the mighty—her father used to say that elderly people liked to be sought out by their old friends' children. Well! she would seek them out. Those old friendships might stand her now in good stead. It was the first time she had ever deliberately appraised her father's friends as being likely to be worth so much and so much to her—but—it was a good cause. . . Then she had youth and beauty—she told herself this as coolly and impersonally as if she had been reckoning up the points of a rival—and neither was to be ignored. She had enough worldly wisdom to know that.

She did not say to herself, as she might have said, that in addition to and far beyond these was another possession—that impalpable, intangible something which for want of a better name we call personal magnetism—that subtle power which attracts and holds, which persuades, convinces, enlists, kindles enthusiasm

from its own flame, and communicates life by the sheer force of its vital touch.

As she looked over her armory, her courage rose. They were a woman's weapons, but they were not to be despised. Her spirit was girding itself for the conflict. There was a positive sense of exhilaration in the thought of action.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A LONG PULL AND A STRONG PULL

THAT session saw a quiet, persistent, effective campaign waged in the city of Washington. Many women living there now will remember it, for many were in its forefront, and what we put ourselves into we do not forget. Many men, too, some still in Congressional circles and some by the mutations of time and politics relegated to private life, may recall it,—not a few for the generous help they gave but a greater number as the unjust judge kept in remembrance the cause of the widow whose continual coming wearied him.

The bill entitled "An act to amend the laws of the District of Columbia as to married women, to make parents the natural guardians of their children, and for other purposes," was introduced in the Senate early in January, and referred to the District Committee. Then the trials of the gentlemen comprising the committee, not to say the whole Senate, began. The beautiful room of the Committee on the District became the Mecca to which many a pilgrimage led. Naturally it was of the first importance to enlist the Committee, and it chanced that one or two of them were hard to enlist, being by nature and environment conservative, and doubtful of anything that looked toward change. Women had always fared well in their part of the country, and been

contented, and they could see no reason why their status elsewhere should be tampered with. This was why Mrs. Belden had been anxious to take Margaret to see Senator Southard, who was one of the Committee, and a conservative of the conservatives.

Yes, that might justly be called a campaign, for it was a "connected series of operations forming a distinct stage in a war," as the dictionary hath it, and moreover all the methods of war were used. There were gallant charges of battalions led by experienced generals, and the not less effective guerrilla warfare in which each fair combatant picked off her man with any weapon that was at hand, caring not for the rules of combat, but only that he fell. Sieges were planned and carried on during that campaign; strategic positions were captured and held; there was an occasional repulse and sometimes danger of rout, but the forces always rallied and, as the winter passed, it was found that they were steadily advancing.

Into this determined but entirely womanly warfare Margaret threw herself with all the ardor of her tempestuous soul. Here was something to do. She had been too long a creature simply "to be" and "to suffer." Before this question of joint guardianship, which to her was the essence of the bill, all other measures up before Congress dwindled into insignificance. It is a difficult thing for women to sink the personal. Sometimes it seems difficult for men also. To Margaret the passage of this bill meant Philip in her arms and the overthrow of her enemy. It had never occurred to her to doubt that it would give her Philip.

The opportunity afforded by her chance meeting with Senator Dalgleish had been diligently followed up. By her own fireside he had listened to the tragedy of her life.

He would have been less than mortal had he heard it unmoved, and when the conversation turned from her wrongs to the bill which, if it became a law, would right such wrongs, it is not strange that he was easily won to its advocacy and ready to become her co-worker. By the way, he told her at leaving, with a thoughtful nod of the head, his colleague was a new man in Washington—a very fine man—though somewhat provincial. Yes, this was his first term—his wife and daughters were somewhat unused to Washington life and might appreciate some attention—as he would himself, indeed. Perhaps —if she would call —

Certainly, Margaret said cheerfully—she would be glad to show any attention in her power to friends of his. And a new lead was opened. When she related the events of the evening to Mrs. Pennybacker that lady remarked, "I don't really suppose, Margaret, that your particular case is any harder than it would be if you were a cross-eyed mother of forty—but it will command more sympathy!"

Some time in January Margaret went with Mrs. Belden to see the Senator from the West who was making the speech on irrigation the day she was in the Senate. He listened in silence to Mrs. Belden's presentation of the case, and then said frankly:

"Ladies, you need n't waste one minute on me. In the first place, I believe in it. But if I did not, there is a good reason why I should support this measure. *I was elected by women's votes.* I should n't dare to go back to my constituents and tell them I voted against this bill."

And into Margaret's mind there flashed an instant recollection of Mrs. Pennybacker's words once, "Perhaps they want the ballot for something they can do with it."

As they went away Mrs. Belden remarked to her: "It is not the Western States we have to fear. They are not the ones that have the narrow constitutions. Thought has advanced since the launching of the original thirteen. It is from the older States that the trouble will come. We want if possible to gain Senator Southard. That will be a triumph indeed, for he is really opposed to it, on principle, I am told."

"What sort of man is Senator Southard? I mean what line of argument would be most apt to appeal to him?"

"Oh, he is a self-made man and opinionated as many of them are—thinks his road to success is the one that everybody ought to take, and all that sort of thing. And yet I really think he would appreciate a good sensible argument."

Margaret was thinking, "Perhaps I can get Aunt Mary after him. That 's her kind." She broached the subject to Mrs. Pennybacker that night.

"Talk to a Senator!" she exclaimed. "Why, Margaret, I never could do it in the world! My tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth."

"Don't you believe it, Margaret," laughed Bess, "I 've never seen grandma's tongue in that position yet, nor the man that could keep it there."

"You 've never seen me in the presence of a Senator," retorted her grandmother, "except a mild type like Senator Dalgleish."

But in spite of her prompt declination she found herself dwelling much upon common sense reasons for the passage of this bill—reasons which might appeal to an elderly man amenable to homely truth. Not that she had any idea of ever using them. No, indeed! She knew her limitations. Her sphere was not lobbying!

But one day when Mrs. Greuze had come by for reinforcements to visit Senator Black, and Margaret was at Elmhurst, Mrs. Pennybacker put on her best bonnet and joined the crusade, taking Bess—who was frankly anxious to go—with her. "You will do for filling," she remarked to her granddaughter. "I may possibly say something, but I don't think I shall."

An audience had been arranged with the Senator and he received them most courteously. Seated in the District Committee room the ladies of the delegation presented quite an imposing appearance. Mrs. Greuze presented Mrs. Pennybacker and her granddaughter, remarking effectively that the Senator would see that this was a cause which enlisted the gray-haired and the rosy-cheeked alike. And the gray hairs nodded assent, while the rosy cheeks grew rosier as the great Senator's gaze rested upon them.

The speakers for this occasion had been decided upon beforehand and the particular line of argument that each should take up. They were lucid, forcible arguments presented by people who knew how. The Senator gave most respectful heed to them.

In all this discussion Bess had, of course, taken no part. Her office was purely decorative—a function which she fulfilled, it may be said in passing, as fully and fragrantly as do the lilies of the field. The elderly Senator, whose sight was not yet obscured, found his attention wandering from the logical arguments of Mrs. Greuze to the sweet face that blossomed at her side. Perhaps there might have been a lurking thought in the minds of these wise sisters that it would be so—that the sweet innocence and beauty of her youthful femininity might prove a solvent for hearts callous to the logic of more angular maturity.

Just now Bess was taking an almost childish interest in the committee-room, with its luxurious appointments and its vaulted ceiling with the Brumidi frescoes. She had always supposed a committee-room was bare. The Senator found his eyes turning to her frequently. She was a sweet fresh blossom! . . And when he spoke she looked at him reverently—being young—as though his utterances were the oracles of God. Secure in her belief that she was only there to swell the numbers and had no part to play, she was divested of all self-consciousness and played it to perfection.

Then the Senator, noticing the rose pink in her cheek, and feeling a mischievous desire to heighten it, turned to her suddenly and said:

"My dear young lady, I don't see how you are interested in this bill. You 'll be pretty sure to get your rights without it—or your privileges, which will count you for more. What are your arguments?"

Bess caught her breath and drew back, crimsoning to the roots of her fluffy hair. That she should be called upon to speak had not entered her pretty head. She had no arguments. To her the bill itself was a question, not of law and right, but of Margaret and her child. She had not reached the age for generalizing; the operations of her mind were still in terms of $2+2$ instead of $a+b$, to follow the genial Autocrat. But there was no coward blood in Bess's veins, though she was pure feminine. She valiantly took up the gage thrown down.

"I have n't any," she said, with a frank laugh. "The other ladies have the argument. I only came to make one more." Then modestly, "But still,—I don't know,—I may be wrong—of course you know so much better about—oh, everything—than I do, but it seems to me that it does concern me more even than it does grandma.

Of course I 'm not a mother—but I hope sometime I may be—I 'd hate awfully to think I never should!" The Senator bowed respectfully to her womanhood, with an indulgent smile and a significant wave of the hand toward the elder ladies. The gesture said, "You see? There is the whole story in a nutshell! This is woman's sphere."

"And then," continued Bess with a flash of her bright eyes, "I tell you I would n't want any old law interfering with my child and giving anybody the right to take it away from me! I 'd fight like a wild-cat! Well,—that 's what they did to Margaret."

"Who is Margaret?" asked the Senator, finding this more interesting than prosaic arguments.

"Oh, I thought you knew about Margaret. Why,—"

"It is the case I was referring to a moment ago, Senator," broke in Mrs. Greuze, a little impatiently. "A case in point exactly. I will repeat—"

"One moment," blandly interposed the gentleman. "Now who is Margaret, my dear?"

"Why, Margaret is our friend—grandma's and mine—the one whose husband willed her baby away from her. I don't know why, I 'm sure—nobody knows—but it was in the will and so it had to stand, the judge said, because that was the law. You must have heard of it."

"No—o. There are so many things to hear, you know. But it interests me. I should like to see your friend. Perhaps you will bring her here to talk with me some day. Her story as you tell it seems to have some bearing on this bill."

Bess looked around at her grandmother. This was getting in rather deep for one who had come only as "filling."

"Certainly," said that lady, with affability and equal

promptness, "you can go over some day. *And I will go with you.*"

At this, attention was bestowed upon the older ladies, and the conference proceeded.

In relating this occurrence to John Harcourt that night Mrs. Pennybacker wound up by saying, with a suggestive motion of the head toward the two bright faces opposite them, "I hardly think that elderly, or even middle-aged, arguments are the thing needed over there! Do you?"

CHAPTER XXXIV

RESCUE WORK

THE lead thus unexpectedly opened by Bess was promptly followed up by Margaret, who was growing quick to see openings and to take advantage of them. At her suggestion a note was despatched the next day to Senator Black, asking for an interview. At the hour appointed the two girls, chaperoned by Mrs. Pennybacker, were there.

It would be hardly possible for a story like Margaret's, heard from the quivering lips of the chief actor in the tragedy and listened to under the spell of her sad, beautiful eyes, to fail of reaching the heart of a man like Senator Black. At its close he reached over and took her hand.

"Mrs. De Jarnette," he said, with genuine feeling, "you have suffered greatly. Let me assure you of my sincerest sympathy and, what will be more to you, I am sure, of my cordial support of this bill. The story of your wrongs under the old law has done for your cause with me what volumes of arguments about property rights could not have effected. To my mind a mother's right to her child is not a question that admits of discussion. You can rely upon me to do what I can for you. I shall esteem it a pleasure to introduce you to some of my colleagues and let them hear your story also."

She was expressing her earnest thanks for this offer when he added, "I only wish it were possible for the bill to do for you personally as much as you can do for the bill."

Somehow the words chilled the glow at Margaret's heart. What did he mean? Why, the bill would do everything for her if it passed. Before she could recover herself sufficiently to ask an explanation the Senator had gone on gallantly, with a wave of the hand toward Bess, "You certainly have an able pleader in this young lady, Mrs. De Jarnette. I am not sure that my support should not be credited at least half to her." And Bess went home on air.

As they were going out of the committee-room they came upon Richard De Jarnette, face to face. He was just going in. They passed each other with the briefest acknowledgment of acquaintance.

"What do you suppose he is doing there?" asked Margaret, much startled.

"Is n't that the district committee-room? He may be there on business with the Commissioners."

"He is there to fight this bill! I know it!"

"Well, there 's one good thing," said Mrs. Pennybacker,—"he will interview Senator Black at an auspicious moment."

When they were seated in the carriage Margaret said thoughtfully, "What do you suppose Senator Black meant by wishing that the passage of the bill might help *me?* Of course it will help me. It will give me Philip if it passes."

"I wondered about that myself," Mrs. Pennybacker replied. Then after a pause she said casually, "There is no doubt that this law, if it ever becomes one, will apply to cases that occurred before it was enacted, is there?"

"Why, no!" said Margaret, with a startled look. "I should n't think so."

After Bess, even, had thus "broken into the Senate," as John Harcourt expressed it in his congratulatory speech delivered when—amid her blushes—the story was repeated to him, Mrs. Pennybacker felt almost cowardly in so persistently refraining her hand (figurative for tongue). It really had not been so dreadful to beard the lion in his den as she had supposed. Perhaps she owed it to the cause, or to Margaret at any rate, to give any assistance in her power. True, she had been more or less occupied with Rosalie since Margaret had taken up this new work, but of late the girl had taken a fancy to be alone more anyway. She certainly would not miss her if she should take an afternoon off.

So one day late in the winter—one of Margaret's days at Elmhurst—when Mrs. Greuze came around in the morning to drum up recruits for a raid on Senator Southard in the afternoon Mrs. Pennybacker was persuaded into going. They were to meet in the Rotunda and proceed in a body to the Senator's committee-room.

On her way to the capitol Mrs. Pennybacker stopped at the home of Mrs. Van Dorn. Mrs. Greuze had said, "It is desirable to interest as many women as possible, from different walks of life, in the passage of this bill—women who will make the Committee see by their presence and their persistency how vital a thing it is to them. There is some truth in what Senator Southard says about many women not caring. It is to the indifference of the women themselves that most of the failures of the woman cause can be traced. We must get a number to go, not necessarily to talk—judgment must be exercised in the selection of the ones to do that—but to give the moral support of their presence." Mrs. Pennybacker deter-

mined when she heard this that she would try to induce her niece to go with them.

"Maria will *look* all right," she said reflectively, recalling whimsically as she said it the young woman who had once shown her "The History of the World" in sixty volumes brilliantly bound in red and gold. She had not had time to acquaint herself with the names of the authors, but the friendly agent had assured her that they were the proper ones, and she said to Mrs. Pennybacker with considerable pride, "They will look all right in a library, won't they?"

Yes, if there was no talking to be done Maria would be a very desirable acquisition. But, the matter being laid before her, it appeared that she could not be acquired.

"I should be willing to go—I think it would be quite interesting to meet some of those gentlemen—of course I don't know anything about the bill—but I really can't, don't you know. I am going to give Toddlekyns a party this afternoon, a birthday party. He is eight, and I have invited eight ladies with their dogs. The birthday cake has just come in. Is n't it lovely! I am going to have eight pink candles on it. Then Mrs. Thompson has sent me the cutest gift—eight lamb chops on a dish with a ruff of paper tied with pink ribbon around each bone. Are n't they dear! She asked me what my color scheme was, but I thought of course it was flowers. I did n't think of such a thing as a gift like this. So appropriate, was n't it?"

"Very!" returned Mrs. Pennybacker, dryly. "I have often given a plate of chops myself (with the meat removed) to the dog next door, but I have never thought of putting on the flub-dubs. I will do so when I get home. I want to go back with all the Washington kinks!"

Mrs. Van Dorn looked at her suspiciously, saying, "Aunt Mary, I cannot understand your aversion to dogs."

"I have no aversion to dogs. It 's doglets I hate. I don't call that thing a dog. Look at him now!"

Toddlekyns, put upon his feet at this moment, looked for all the world like an animated, decorated monkey muff. His silky tail was tied with a blue ribbon and a long forelock combed down over his eyes was adorned in like manner; his face and legs were lost in a mass of curling silky hair; and really it was difficult for one confronting Toddlekyns to tell whether he was in danger of a head end or rear end collision.

"Now a real dog," continued Mrs. Pennybacker, reflectively, "is different. There is no more beautiful sight than a child hanging about a Scotch Collie or a big Newfoundland. A *child* might hug a dog and I would think it was all right. . . I don't wonder that a shepherd is fond of an animal that can round up sheep with the intelligence of a man. A mastiff in a back yard —one that has to be chained up to keep him from chewing up any intruder—has something almost human about him. He knows that his home is his castle. There is character about such a dog as that. . . And the St. Bernards! Why, Maria, I hope I am not irreverent— when I think of those noble creatures plowing through snow and storm to rescue some poor perishing mortal, it seems to me almost a type of the Divine love that came to seek and to save the lost. It does, indeed. But it 's a far cry from the monks and dogs of St. Bernard to the idle women and the poodles of the cities."

"The very best people," said Mrs. Van Dorn firmly, "make much of dogs. It is the thing to do. Why, Aunt Mary, the bench shows of New York are simply immense."

"I know it. I 've read about them. There certainly is something strange about how people that have this dog craze let it run away with them. Mrs. Joel Bennett used to tell a story on a Kansas City minister who was very fond of dogs. She was living with her son George who had a lot of them and was a good hand to train them. She was very sick at one time and this minister, who was her pastor, used to come out often to see her—giving spiritual comfort to her and dog talk to George, I suppose. Well, one day he had but a short time to stay, having to catch a train, and he asked her if there was any special subject she would like to have him converse upon. Mrs. Bennett was a very old-fashioned Christian, so she said yes, she would like to have him talk to her about the plan of salvation. 'Mrs. Bennett,' he said, 'there is nothing I feel so sure of, and nothing that it delights me more to talk about than the plan of salvation.' Just then George came in with one of the dogs. Naturally they fell to talking about it. 'And,' Mrs. Bennett used to say with a twinkle of her eye, 'that was the last I heard of the plan of salvation!' "

She smiled to herself reminiscently, as she always did in recalling her friend.

"How is Margaret?" asked Mrs. Van Dorn, after a pause. The dog story did not seem to require comment. It was rather pointless, but she politely ignored that. "I suppose she is still lonely without Philip. Or does she get over it?"

"I can't say that she has got entirely over it."

"Aunt Mary, I don't know that you will agree with me," Mrs. Van Dorn said with some firmness, "but *I* think if Margaret would get her mind on something besides herself—society or something of that kind—she would be a great deal better off. Or philanthropy would

be a good thing for her." Mrs. Van Dorn had never yet been told about Rosalie and her child. "Some of those things are in excellent form. I was just reading as you came in about one that seems to me so beautiful. So—so inspiring."

"What is it?" Mrs. Pennybacker was glad to know of any phase of philanthropy that interested her niece.

"It is a form of rescue work. The article is headed

'Permanent Refuge for Homeless Dogs.'

I 'll read it to you.

"'At a recent meeting of the Bullion Society for Homeless Dogs, held at the residence of Mrs. Sarah Holden, it was unanimously agreed to change the original name of the organization to Animal Rescue League of Washington, in view of the widened scope of the work. Arrangements were completed for the purchase of a home in the neighborhood of Hyattsville, Md., where a permanent refuge will be established for the care of dogs. It is the intention of the league to remove the home to their new quarters at Hyattsville early in the autumn, where they will keep open house throughout the year.'

"Is n't that a beneficent charity!" she exclaimed, a rapt expression on her unlined face.

"Beneficent fiddlesticks!" returned Mrs. Pennybacker, "If I were called upon to characterize that proceeding with exactness, Maria, I should call it sentimental gush gone to seed. What are they going to save these dogs from? a dependent old age—or a life of shame?"

Like most persons of her calibre Mrs. Van Dorn was deficient in a sense of humor. She missed the satirical note and answered literally, "They are going to provide a home for the homeless and befriend the friendless."

"That sounds well."

"It is Christlike!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Dorn, with more enthusiasm than she usually exhibited. "Why, the officers elected—I did n't read you their names—are away up in society."

"It is certainly Christlike to befriend the friendless," returned Mrs. Pennybacker, ignoring the social status of the officers elected—"but it strikes me there needs to be a modicum of sense displayed in the choice of subjects. As I remember it, Christ always gave the preference to those that do not perish like the beasts. He came looking after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, it is true, but they were sheep with souls. I don't seem to remember that he spent much time hunting up stray dogs. Indeed, the only case I recall in which He paid attention to animals at all was in the Gadarene country, and that was rather disastrous to the animals. You remember he sacrificed a whole herd of swine (two thousand in number, Mark says) to save the reason of one poor suffering lunatic. I think that was about the right proportion. To my mind it shows the relative importance he attaches to the two. . . . How Christian women can walk around here in the southwest quarter of Washington, and then give their energies to rescuing *dogs* is more than I can understand!"

When she had got a block or so away from the house she opened her rather tightly set lips to remark to herself,

"It is just as well. She might have been tempted to say something. Some of these brilliantly bound volumes do have such fool things in them!"

CHAPTER XXXV

MRS. PENNYBACKER TALKS

IN Senator Southard's committee-room Mrs. Pennybacker found herself surrounded with earnest women pleading for the weak and helpless of their own sex, and life seemed suddenly to have widened out into a great and noble thing. She drew long breaths as one does in stepping from the confined atmosphere of a close room into the pure free air of heaven. It was glorious to be alive and to have a part in a work like this. She thanked God that she would be permitted to add her mite to the efforts making up the sum total of this movement for the betterment of woman's estate. She saw her duty now and was ready to do it. If opportunity offered she would no longer shrink back from saying her word.

Opportunity did not offer until late in the interview,—after women's property rights and business rights had all been disposed of. She had said to Mrs. Greuze when that lady had urged her to take some part in the discussion, "I could n't help you a particle until it comes to the item of joint guardianship. I don't know anything about those other questions. But I have some views on maternal rights, and maybe I could make them understood."

"That is exactly what we want you to talk about,"

said Mrs. Greuze. "These other women who have studied up the subject can attend to the first part of the bill, but when it comes to a mother's rights I know you could say something to the point and that it would be put in a telling way."

It is an insidious kind of flattery. Even Mrs. Pennybacker was not proof against it. As they made their way through the corridors leading from the Rotunda to the committee-room she was figuratively girding up her loins.

When the delegation filed into his committee-room Senator Southard felt glad that it was here he was to receive them. He was the kind of man that relies upon office furniture and green covered table for moral support in an encounter with the opposite sex. These things impress women (some women); and the flim-flameries of a drawing-room depress men (some men). The consciousness that they had invaded his territory put him at his ease. He listened attentively to the various arguments advanced, putting in a word here and there, bowing assent frequently, and nodding thoughtfully as a new train of thought was suggested. All seemed to be going so well that Mrs. Pennybacker began to feel that her word would be superfluous. But Mrs. Greuze who had had wider experience in these things observed that the Senator had never once committed himself. She even thought she could discover a little vein of combativeness in his attitude.

A Mrs. Allaine had just finished a forcible plea for the right of women to carry on business in their own names.

"Ladies," said the Senator, "I hope you will pardon me when I say that I seriously question the expediency of a woman's ever entering upon a business career."

"We are not here, Senator," Mrs. Allaine replied

quickly, "to argue a question of expediency, but of right. You will not deny that it should be lawful for a woman to earn her bread in any honest way, even if it be not expedient."

The Senator fell back upon platitudes. "Man is the natural bread-winner," he asserted with a trace—just a trace—of patronage. "It is the privilege of the strong to provide for the weak."

"In these days of late marriages," retorted Mrs. Allaine with a laugh, "men seem rather reluctant to claim their privileges. And in the meantime a woman must provide for herself and those dependent upon her or go to the wall. Suppose such a woman should ask you to show cause why she should not do it in her own way, what would you tell her? Or supposing even that it is not a question of support. She has a life on her hands which must be filled with something. What would you advise her to turn to?"

The Senator was not ready with his answer to this question, and a small lady with very bright black eyes occupied his time.

"George William Curtis says tell her that God has given her the nursery, the ball-room, and the opera; and that, if these fail, he has graciously provided the kitchen, the washtub, and the needle."

The Senator emerged from the laugh that followed, not to answer the question put to him but to say, "I am not yet convinced, ladies, that it is the wish of the majority of the women of this District that this bill should become a law."

"Our delegation represents five thousand women," protested Mrs. Allaine.

"I will admit that this is a large and representative delegation," said the Senator, with a complimentary wave of his hand, "but even five thousand is a small part of

the women of the District. Where are the ninety and nine that do not come forward?"

"Many of them, Senator, are too ignorant to realize their own wrongs or to know that there is any redress for them. It is because of that very ignorance and helplessness that we are here to plead for them."

"And yet it is true, as Senator Southard says," said Mrs. Greuze, "and we may as well admit it, that too many women are apathetic about these things. I was once myself. I say it with shame and confusion of face, for I see things very differently now; but I had always had all the rights I wanted and did not know how many people there were in the world who were not so fortunate as I. One third of the women don't know that these things exist, because they have never been touched by them, and another third don't care. It is left for a very small remnant—not a third, though they will be a third some day—who both know and care, to straighten things out."

"That is true," corroborated Mrs. Pennybacker, who had as yet taken no part in the discussion. "I went by for a lady to-day to come over here with us and she declined promptly. Said she had more important work at home. She illustrates one class of women who—"

"And a very important class, let me say," interposed the Senator, promptly associating all the womanly virtues with her who stayed at home, especially with her who stayed away from the committee-room—"a class which, it is to be hoped for the good of the nation, will never grow smaller or less powerful. I trust you will pardon my plainness, ladies,—I am a plain man and must talk to you to-day as one man talks to another—"

"Or as a man may always safely talk to earnest women," said Mrs. Greuze.

The Senator bowed.

"It is to this class, I was going to say, rather than to those who go outside the sacred precincts of the home, striving to stir up antagonism between the sexes, seeking even as your honorable body is doing to-day, to—to—"

"To secure a mother's right to her children," prompted Mrs. Pennybacker.

The Senator frowned slightly.

"—seeking to influence legislation, I was going to remark. It is to such noble women, content to immolate themselves upon the altar of sacrifice for their little ones—to find their broadest field of endeavor within the sanctuary of home—"

Mrs. Pennybacker was regarding the Senator with marked attention. Had he known her better he might not have considered this cause for unmixed felicitation. As it was, he felt the subtle flattery of her deferential hanging upon his every word, and, stimulated by it, soared higher."

"Ah, ladies, I cannot refrain from expressing the belief that it is to such noble women that we must look for the regeneration of the race. They are doing a great work—as somebody remarked—I cannot at this moment recall exactly who it was that said it—but—"

"If you were going to say that they were doing a great work and could not come down," remarked the small woman with the bright eyes who had a satirical look of having heard this before, "it was Nehemiah, and he said it to Sanballat."

"Yes, yes," said the Senator, who was a trifle weak in the Hebrew prophets,—"that 's it exactly. 'They are doing a great work, so that they cannot come down.' That is what these noble women who stay at home are doing—"

"Ye-es," observed Mrs. Pennybacker, reflectively. "This one was having a dog party to-day and eight other noble women who could n't come down were going to take their dogs to it."

This punctured the Senator's oratorical balloon so sharply that it came to earth with a thump, leaving him not even a parachute to hang to. And while it was in collapse, Mrs. Pennybacker, whose tongue no longer clave to the roof of her mouth, took the opportunity to remark:

"It is dangerous to generalize, Senator Southard, unless you have a good deal of data. I have observed that not all of the women who stay away from public gatherings and committee meetings do so because of their devotion to their children. Some of them have n't any children and *won't* have. They can't take time from their pleasures to be bothered with babies. Or they are not willing to give up the apartment house, where they can have every comfort, every luxury,—except children. Some of them substitute dogs, and give dog parties.

"But the women we are talking about, Senator Southard," she went on earnestly, "are not of that kind. They are the women who *have* children, and want to establish their legal right to them. The mother part of this bill is the one I am talking for. It may be that a married woman *has* no right to her own property—though I will confess that it beats me to see why; it may be that she should *not* have the right to buy, sell, or convey property. (So far as that is concerned, a good many married *men* ought not to have that right, having such poor business judgment that their wives should have been appointed their guardians from the start.) And I am not at all sure but I should agree with you that it is not expedient for women to carry on business—I think

a good deal may be said on both sides of that question. (You need n't look at me that way, Mrs. Allaine. I *said* expedient. Of course it should be lawful.) No, there is room for an honest difference of opinion on all these points, but when it comes to the question of a mother having an equal right with the father to the child she has borne, I cannot see how there can be two opinions there. To my mind the question of joint guardianship is the pith of this bill. It touches women at their tenderest point,—and it touches them every one."

Mrs. Greuze nodded slightly to a lady across the room. This was going all right. She motioned with one eye to the Senator, who was listening with respectful attention. It had been a little more respectful, perhaps, since Mrs. Pennybacker had agreed with him as to the inexpediency of a woman's going into business. We are all human—even Senators. Mrs. Pennybacker had lost herself in her subject. These things had been seething in her soul since the night Margaret came to her, a fugitive. Now that her tongue was loosed she was glad, more than glad to give them utterance.

"Think of a mother having to stand and plead for a legal right to the child she has borne," she went on, moving her chair a little nearer to the Senator. "When you come right down to it, who has a right that approaches hers? Leaving out of account all sentiment, all thought of the price she has paid for ownership in her offspring, and looking at it in a purely practical way, who has a right that can be better substantiated? Who is it that risks her life every time there is a child born into the world? *The mother.* Who is it that the Almighty has fitted to take care of those children? *The mother.* Who is it that keeps the family together? *The mother.* When a man dies and leaves a lot of helpless little ones, what does a woman do? Give those children

away to this one and that—anybody that can be induced by love or money to take them? Ah, no! She gets out her sewing machine or her washtub and goes to work. She does n't know any other way. She does n't want any other way. It may be but a poor little shack that she has to keep them in—it has n't any of the luxuries of the apartment house—but it has the children. And it is a home. And *she makes it.* In nine cases out of ten she does n't ask any help about it either. It is often pretty short commons with them. She gives them meat when she can get it, and bean-soup and encouragement when she can't. But ten chances to one she will make men and women of them. The most worthless men in a community are not widow's sons as a rule. Did you ever think of that, Senator Southard?"

The Senator nodded reflectively. He had often thought of it. This was a hobby. He was a widow's son himself as it happened, and had been reared in just such a school, though he was leagues and leagues away from it now. There rose before him the little bowed mother in black who had struggled for him at her machine. His eyes softened as he thought of it.

"Sometimes," continued Mrs. Pennybacker, "she is a grade beyond the wash-tub and the scrubbing brush. What does she do then? Brushes the cobwebs off the little acquirements the public school or the "Ladies' Seminary" gave her years ago, and finds a place to teach; or scrapes together enough money to buy a type-writer, and goes to work. She may have to be away from them through the day, but you never hear of her making that an excuse for foisting her children on somebody else. She makes some shift—gets somebody to stay with them while she is gone, or does something—and *she keeps them together.*

"By the way, Senator Southard, speaking of scanty

equipment, do you know of anything crueler than thrusting a woman out into the world to fight for herself and her fatherless children with no weapons but a needle's point and a broom-stick? It is getting better all the time, I will admit, but education in my day was like teaching a boy to swim and a girl to wade, and then taking them out into deep water and shoving them both overboard. Of course the boy can strike out. It was intended that he should. Deep water helps him. But the girl—Beg pardon? The girl, you think, generally shoves herself out in these days? Not always. Often the swimmer who is bearing her and her little ones up goes down. Death does n't care anything about sex. And I have never noticed that he enquires even whether a man can be spared, or how many are dependant upon him. He just sends a big wave over him and down he goes. Then, of course, the woman who has been carried along before this has to strike out with one hand while she holds the children up with the other. Often she can't do more than 'tread water' until the oldest boy is able to swim."

And again the Senator's mind went back to the brave little mother in black 'treading water'—that was about what it was—she could hardly keep their heads above the waves. He looked up at the ceiling with eyes that did not see the frescoing. They were filled with a vision of the little unpainted house, the hollyhocks, the kitchen fire around which they had all crowded (she would not let one of them go)—the scanty table—the patched knees. And she had never lived to see him here!

"I wonder they any of them reach the shore," Mrs. Pennybacker was saying when he came back to the committee-room, "I don't believe many of them would if it were not for the touch of little hands. They would

give up and go under. But the very thing that you would think would drag them down is what buoys them up. With a child's hand clinging to her hand, and a child's eyes looking into hers, the way they look up into a mother's eyes, a woman's *got* to struggle. She can't help it any more than she can help breathing."

"It is the parent's instinct, I suppose," said the Senator, thoughtfully.

"I don't know. It does n't seem to be the male parent's instinct. His first motion generally is to disencumber himself. A *man* can give his children away and not half try."

Mrs. Pennybacker had been borne along by her interest in the subject and its entirely familiar aspect, forgetting her companions and everything else but the Senator she wanted to convince. The other ladies telegraphed approbation to one another as she proceeded. But when she thus began to turn the other side of the shield, for some reason glances of disapproval and slight frowns began to pass among them. One of them, leaning forward to lay something on the table, adopted the feminine expedient of touching Mrs. Pennybacker's foot significantly. That lady turned and looked at her with the obtuseness of a man at his own dinner-table, and then proceeded:

"What does a man do when his wife dies and leaves him with a family of children? Keep them together as she does? No, indeed! He knows he can't and I am not saying that he can, for little children and the care of them belong rightfully and naturally to women, and that is why we are trying to have this law changed so as to give her a legal as well as a natural right to them. . . What does he do? Why, he gives them away to anybody that will take them. It does n't

hurt him in the least, apparently, to see them scattered to the four winds of heaven. Or—and this is what he does oftener than anything else—"

There was now marked consternation in the faces of the ladies behind her, for they knew as well as she did what men do oftener than anything else.

"Oftener than any other way he looks around for some girl—usually the youngest he can find that will have him—somebody, of course, that does n't know one thing about children—he is n't thinking about that—and marries her, just as soon as decency allows, and sometimes sooner."

"Well! . . She has done it now!" whispered Mrs. Greuze to the black-eyed lady who was acquainted with Sanballat and Nehemiah.

Mrs. Pennybacker noticed a peculiar look on the Senator's face, whether of amusement, embarrassment, or offence she could not tell, and was made dimly conscious by a glance at her companions that something was wrong, but she had thought of a story that she wanted to tell and was not to be suppressed.

"Why, Senator Southard, I actually heard a Judge in the Supreme Court of this District defend that atrocious law of Charles II by which a man has the right to will his children away from the mother, on the ground that women were likely to marry again! *Women* likely to marry again! Will you think of that? I wanted to rise up in court and say to him what I said to a man who was trying to prove to me one day that more men died than women. 'Just look at the great number of widows on South Street,' he said, 'and compare them with the small number of widowers.' 'Heavens and earth!' I said, 'that is n't owing to any undue mortality among the men. It is because they won't remain widowers!' "

The Senator laughed a little constrainedly, saying that he guessed they could n't deny the soft impeachment, but that their defense was in the attractiveness of the other sex. Mrs. Greuze put in a graceful word which had the effect to switch the conversation gently to another track without perceptible jar, and the conference was soon at an end.

Out in the corridor with the door of the committee-room safely closed, they gathered excitedly around Mrs. Pennybacker.

"Well! What is it? What have I done?" she demanded.

"Oh!" groaned Mrs. Greuze, "you 've killed us *dead!* We 'll never recover from this. Don't you know that is exactly what he did? Married a girl younger than his daughter—and in less than a year!"

Mrs. Pennybacker's jaw dropped.

"I ought not to have come," she said. "I told you I would be sure to say something! You ought not to have *let* me come." Then her ever-present sense of humor came to her relief. "Well, there 's one comfort. It was the truth! And he got it straight!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

MARGARET'S RESOLVE

WHILE Mrs. Pennybacker was thus effectively wielding the battle-ax that common sense and observation had laid ready at her hand, Margaret, bleeding on the field, was well-nigh ready to give up the fight. An ambushed foe had fallen upon her and borne her down, and before she could recover herself, Courage, who had been through it all her strong support and chiefest counselor, had turned craven and fled.

While this fitly, though inadequately, describes the girl's condition of mind as she sat in the car swiftly traversing the short distance between Elmhurst and Washington, there was nothing in her outward appearance to indicate that it was so.

The occupants in that parlor-car saw in Margaret a well-dressed, quiet-appearing young woman, remarkable for nothing perhaps but the pronounced beauty of her face and her rather queenly carriage. It was a mild surprise to see a woman of this type get on at a way station. As she sat intently looking out of the window at the moving panorama of winter trees seen now to best advantage stripped of their summer garments, one might have thought her a devotee of Nature, with an eye and heart single to that alone.

But the oaks and the elms and the lesser folk of the

tree-world were in reality making an impression on a retina as unseeing as though back of it there were no brain. This quiet, self-contained looking lady looking out at the wintry landscape with such apparent appreciation was saying to herself in the abandon of despair, "Is it true? Can it be true?"

A phantom shape had been pursuing Margaret De Jarnette for months—a specter of evil form and visage. It had given her just a glimpse of itself now and then; it was quick to hide behind more agreeable forms and she was always glad to lose it; then she would forget it until some day it would start up before her like a grinning death's head for a brief second and again disappear. She had eluded it. She had denied its existence even to herself, but she knew now that she had feared it from the first and refused to face it. To-day it had taken bodily shape and grappled with her.

It was through Mammy Cely that the incarnation came. Margaret had been talking to the old woman as she often did about the case in court, its long delay, and finally the bill and the relief which that promised even if the case in court failed.

"Miss Margaret," said Mammy Cely, not looking at her, but speaking in a voice of great compassionateness, "is you sho' that bill gwineter he'p you?"

"Why, certainly!" Margaret answered as she had answered Mrs. Pennybacker when she had asked the same foolish question (it was at such times that the specter rose before her), "It will give me Philip."

Mammy Cely still looked away.

"Marse Richard 'low that bill don't have nothin' 't all to do with Philip. Maybe he don't know," she added, but rather doubtfully, for she had boundless confidence in Richard's knowledge.

"He certainly does not know," said Margaret sharply. "How did you happen to be talking to him about it?"

"I jes' accidently mentioned that you was layin' off to take Philip as soon as the bill passed, and he 'low the bill did n't have no bearin' on the case. He say it can't ondo a thing that was done years ago."

Margaret felt that she had received a blow. A sudden recollection of Senator Black's words flashed upon her and she grew so white that Mammy Cely prudently refrained from any more discussion of the subject. She might have told her how in the goodness of her heart she had gone to Mr. De Jarnette, hoping to stir pity in his breast, and said, "Marse Richard, do you reckon that po' chile gwineter live ef this here bill givin' her Philip don't pass?" and how he had answered her in shocked amazement, "Giving her Philip! Great heavens, you don't tell me she is expecting that?"

He really looked so concerned that it seemed to Mammy Cely as if the emotion she had been trying to fan into flame flared up for a moment, but it and her hope went out together as he added coldly, "If that is what she is working for, she might as well give it up. That bill could n't undo what was done years ago." She did not tell Margaret all this, however, contenting herself with repeating, "No 'm, he say it don't have no bearin' on the case."

"It is false!" cried Margaret, with vehement iteration. "He 'll find that it will have some bearing on the case before we are through."

Her anger sustained her until she reached the station. Then when she had kissed Philip good-bye and settled back weakly in her seat, a horrible sinking of soul came over her. What if it were true? Looking out at the shivering trees and the leaden sky impassively, she was

telling herself in a transport of feeling and of fear that it was not true! It could n't be true!

But thinking of Senator Black's strange look of pity and his stranger words, "I wish this bill could do as much for you, Mrs. De Jarnette, as you can do for it," doubt began to clutch at her heart. Was this what he meant? Going over her interviews with this one and that in these weeks it seemed to her that she could recall traces of compassion in their words, their looks, as they talked with her. She had thought then it was pity for her wrongs. Was it for her blindness? . . . . Why had nobody told her? Had she no friend that it must be left for her enemy to enlighten her? Why had they let her go on working for this thing as though her soul's salvation had depended upon it—only to find out when all was done, that it was but an abstract law—something that would be useful to humanity perhaps, but left her desolate as before. . . Humanity! What was humanity to a mother robbed?

Shame smote her then. She heard the voice of Mrs. Greuze saying of a fellow worker. "She has a heart big enough to take in the world and all its woes." But then Mrs. Belden was childless. Perhaps God had given her empty hands that she might work for weak ones too weighted down with cares to help themselves. Well! He had emptied her arms too. Was it thus that the great heart of humanity was brought to throb in unison?

She felt suddenly strengthless as if some spring of life were broken. . . . How she had labored for this thing, sparing not herself in any way, giving time and strength and travail of soul to the furtherance of this bill. And to what purpose? Only an hour ago she was planning what she would say to Senator Blanton when she went to see him. She had been so suc-

cessful that she was eager to try her powers of persuasion again. It was a joy to work in a great cause like this. Now the zest had faded out of life as the color out of an evening cloud. Everything was stale, flat and unprofitable. "What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" came suddenly to her mind with a force never felt before. Who was it said that? . . . Oh, yes, the Wise Man of course. She had often heard Mrs. Pennybacker quote the words. Well! he *was* wise, she told herself scornfully. There *was* no profit. And the Wise Man had found it out. She wondered weakly, feeling very tired all at once, if he had discovered it before he had worn himself out.

The train moved steadily on. The scene constantly shifted, but she did not see.

Mr. De Jarnette—had said—that—the bill would not give her Philip. She must think it out before she got there—what to do—now.

At the station her carriage was waiting for her.

"To Judge Kirtley's office."

On the way, looking absently from the carriage window, she saw a lady with a little boy about Philip's age holding to her hand and skipping by her side. It was strange, but all the children seemed to be about Philip's age. The boy was telling something eagerly and she could catch his childish treble and see the mother smile. A pang shot through her to see the sweet comradeship between the two. Did the woman know how blest she was?

On the street in full view of the Capitol they passed the entrance to one of the blind alleys that still disgrace Washington. A drunken man piloted by a woman with a baby in her arms and another clinging to her skirts was making toward the alley. The man, insecure of footing, lurched forward almost under the horses' feet.

The coachman reined them in suddenly and the woman jerked the man back. With an oath he turned and struck her, kicking the child when it cried with fright.

Margaret drew a quick breath. Here—here under the very shadow of the Dome, a drunken, brutish man who could neither protect his children nor take care of himself, was given rights to those children that the mother could not share—could not share and could not shake off! Unless—unless the bill should pass! She leaned back in the carriage and closed her eyes.

In the office she lost no time in circumlocution.

"Judge Kirtley," she asked, cutting short his protestations of surprise at seeing her, "is it true that if this joint guardianship bill passes it will not give me Philip?"

"Give you Philip? Why, child—my *dear* child, you have n't supposed—God bless my soul" he broke off abruptly. The idea that her ignorance of the law should have misled her into supposing that the bill would help her personally, except so far as it might influence the decision of the court when her case came up had never occurred to him. She had thrown herself headlong into this movement without asking advice from anybody, but he had supposed that it was from her rather natural sympathy for womankind, and he had welcomed it as a diversion to her in the trying time of awaiting action by the court. In fact, he had encouraged her efforts. He was wondering now blankly if that encouragement had not been ill-judged.

"It would not help me in any way?" she persisted, reading the answer in his disturbed face. He answered her plainly then, though with a lawyer's caution.

"The fact that such a bill had been passed after much agitation might have its effect upon the decision of the court when your case comes up. I should not say that that would be impossible, nor even improbable. But

that is the only way in which it could affect it. A law like that would not be retroactive. It is better for you to know this now, Margaret."

She sat so long without speaking that he began nervously to dread a break-down or an outburst such as she used to give way to. He had no need to fear. The woman before him was not the girl of those tempestuous days. No school develops us so swiftly as sorrow's school. With the little nunnery maid who talked with Guinevere, she had learned

"to cry her cry in silence, and have done."

"But it would help other women, in years to come," she said at last in a voice that thrilled with feeling— "women who cannot fight for themselves—" the woman of the street was before her— "who do not have a friend like you to fight for them?"

"Unquestionably. If that bill becomes a law no other woman in this District will ever stand where you do to-day pleading for her child."

She stood up then with eyes shining and head thrown back.

"Then let me do what I can," she cried. "This is not for one woman but for many."

Oddly enough, as he looked at her, there came into his mind two pictures he had seen on her own walls,— one, the old familiar one of the sitting mother clasping to her heart the Divine Child as if she would keep Him forever within her sheltering arms; the other, with face illumined and a larger vision that took in the whole world's needs, holding the Christ-child up, an offering to humanity.

The woman before him might have been a "chair madonna" yesterday; to-day she was a "Sistine."

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE RED PAPER

SPRING was come. Once more had been wrought the old, old miracle which is ever new, and every tree-crowned hill and nestling valley around Washington was singing the resurrection song. Even the green grass at Margaret's feet and the hyacinths and daffodils as she moved among them seemed to say: "Lo, the winter is past; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land."

There was a note of jubilance in it all. Perhaps she was feeling still the influence of the Easter "Allelujahs" of yesterday; perhaps it was that the mellowness of the warm spring air had somehow got into her very soul this morning and swept away the clouds of doubt; or possibly it was only that Margaret was young, and "hope springs eternal." Whatever the cause, the girl looked out upon the world of budding nature around her with an ecstacy which had its overtone of sadness, as all such ecstacies have for natures like hers. . . It was a beautiful world! a beautiful world! And it would not be long now.

She knelt upon the grass by her flower beds and buried her face in the sweet fragrance of the hyacinths. Her heart was strangely open this Easter Monday to the influences around her. . . Yes, spring had come. The long lonely winter was gone. It had been long—

long and lonely! But Judge Kirtley had said the case must come up soon. And when it did, she surely would get him. It seemed almost certain now that the bill would pass, and it *must* help her in some way. Even Judge Kirtley had said it might have its influence with the court.

Then her thoughts passed to pleasanter things, for Philip was to spend a whole day with her, and she was to take the children to the Easter Monday egg-rolling. Mammy Cely had laid it before Mr. De Jarnette that any child living within going distance and then not allowed to embrace the opportunity was "jes' bodaciously robbed." And indeed it was almost true, for it is a time-honored festival for the children of Washington in which white, black, and brown participate. Mammy Cely had been coloring eggs for days.

That egg-rolling stood out afterwards in Margaret De Jarnette's mind as a day of perfect happiness, save for the knowledge that it must soon end. The delight of the children at the animated scene on the White Lot was unbounded,—that of Mrs. Pennybacker and Bess not far behind it. Even Mr. Harcourt found them before the morning was over, and found them in a characteristic way.

The word was passed quietly around that the President would appear at a certain time on the south portico, and the crowd gathered there. The De Jarnette party happened to be standing near a policeman when a distracted mother rushed up to him.

"Oh, have you seen my little girl? I 've lost her! She is only four! Oh, what shall I do!"

"Don't get excited," the policeman said, with a soothing gesture,—"she has been taken over to the east gate."

"Oh, have you found her?"

"No, but I have found you. Somebody else will find her and take her there. So we will get you together."

Hardly had she gone on her way rejoicing before another appeared in like distress.

"Officer! I 've lost my little boy! Oh, what shall I do? He had on a blue suit, and he is so timid!"

"Don't get excited," the man said,—"you will find him over at the east entrance," etc., etc.

"You seem to have plenty to do," said Mrs. Pennybacker.

"Oh, yes. They lose their children this way all day long. You let go a child's hand in a crowd like this and he is lost in a minute."

Bess and Margaret each tightened her clutch of a little hand. The crowd was very dense here, for even democratic America loves to see its chief executive. Mrs. Pennybacker had pushed a little ahead of the policeman and was looking at the rounding colonnade when she heard an anxious falsetto voice behind her.

"Oh, *have* you seen an old lady about eighty-five—with dress and spectacles on? She 's got away from me. What *shall* I do!"

"Don't get excited! You 'll find her over at the east entrance," said the policeman in his mechanical formula. He was struggling with the crowd and had not quite caught the description.

Mrs. Pennybacker turned around to find John Harcourt doubled up with laughter.

"You rascal! You 'll die of some sort of degeneracy of the heart long before I 'm eighty-five!"

For hours the tide set in through the east entrance and swirled and ebbed and flowed. When at last the gates closed upon the throng the De Jarnette party sought

the Ellipse, where the children had been promised a lunch.

Harcourt and Bess had fallen behind the others. As they reached the seats beneath the trees he said wheedlingly to Mrs. Pennybacker, "I don't think your little girl has had a very good time to-day. She has n't had any eggs, or balloon, or anything. Suppose you let me give her a row up the river just to keep her from feeling neglected." Then looking at the basket, "We 'll take the portion that falls to us and eat it on the way."

When the two were gone and the children had had their lunch and gone off to play, the two ladies sat and watched them.

"How nicely they play together," remarked Margaret.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pennybacker absently. "Margaret, I am quite disturbed about Rosalie. I don't know what to make of her lately."

"What is the trouble? Has she had any more of those fainting spells?"

"Never since the first one. The nurse thought she was likely to have them at any time, but she has never had another. Queer what caused that."

"Weakness, I suppose. And yet she grows weaker every day."

"Yes, Margaret, somehow she has never seemed the same to me since that day. You know how happy she was when she first came. We were speaking that very morning, I remember, about the look of peace that had come into her face."

"Yes. She had lost that distressed expression. Do you suppose she can feel hurt at my being with her so little these days?"

"No, it is n't that. Sometimes I think she is more

troubled after you have been there than at any other time. The nurse even has noticed it. Sometimes I think she has something on her mind still—something she wants to tell."

"Why, she has told me everything. It can't be that."

"I told her about the bill one day, feeling that it would do her good to have something new to think about. She seemed to feel quite a little interested in it. Asks me from time to time how it is getting along, and always if it will give you Philip. She seemed greatly troubled over what Judge Kirtley said."

"A mother's sympathy, I suppose. Poor girl!"

"I guess it must have been that. But it 's queer. It was that very day that I heard her moaning to herself—she did n't know I was in the room—and I went to her and said, 'Rosalie, what is it that troubles you?' She looked up at me in such a distressed way and said, 'Oh, I have been a wicked woman! If I could only confess—' "

"Confess!"

"That was what she said. I said, 'Rosalie, child, confess to God. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' Margaret, I never shall forget the answer she gave me. She said in a sort of despair, 'I have! I have! but He hides His face.' "

"Poor child!" said Margaret. "I will go in to-morrow and see her."

Somehow, Margaret had never found the parting from Philip so hard as it was to-day. "I have such an unaccountable dread of something happening to him," she said. "I have never felt it before."

"I ain't gwineter let nothin' happen to him, Miss Margaret. He jes' as safe with me as he is with you. Ain't I tuk good keer of him all winter?"

The child did look the picture of health and wholesomeness. His cheeks were glowing now from his chase of Louis and his eyes were bright. But at the mention of his going they overflowed.

"Mama, I don't want to go! Why can't I stay wiv you and Louis?"

"Oh, darling!" It broke her heart to send him away.

Mammy Cely was to take Philip to his uncle's office on F Street. When she got there Mr. De Jarnette was just starting to leave the place with some papers.

"Take him on to the B. and O.," he directed. "I have to see a man on North Capitol, but I will be at the station before train time."

"Unker Wichard, let me go wiv you," begged Philip. "I won't bovver you."

Mr. De Jarnette considered. It was but a step from North Capitol to the station, and he wanted to see the man but for a moment.

"All right, Philip." Adding to the old woman, "We will meet you at the B. and O."

"Marse Richard," said Mammy Cely, with unaccountable shrinking from letting the child go out of her keeping, "please, sir, don't take him. I—I done promise Miss Margaret I ain't gwineter let nothin' happen to him. Look lak I can't bear to have him outer my sight. No, sir."

He stopped her with a peremptory gesture. "Go along to the station. I certainly can take care of this child for fifteen minutes. Come, Philip."

While they were waiting in the house on North Capitol Mr. De Jarnette took out the deed he had to deliver and was looking it over. The girl who opened the door had said Mr. Holton would be in in a moment. But the moment lengthened, and Philip catching sight

of a child peering in bashfully from the hall, and feeling the attraction of youth for youth, edged out toward him. Then the man of the house came into the parlor from a room back of it, and the sound of voices came to Philip. He was very sure that he was not bothering his Uncle Richard now and he was by nature a friendly child.

"What 's the matter wiv your hands?" he asked.

The other child, a little younger, stood bashfully picking at his palm.

"Peelin'," he said laconically. Then, brightening up, "Say! I got a dog."

When Richard De Jarnette and the man stepped into the hall a few moments later Philip was alone. The boy had gone to get the dog. The man looked startled to see a child there, and opened his mouth to speak, but Richard took Philip's hand, said good-night hastily, and what the man called after them was not heeded.

As they went out of the yard the child with the close observation of his age, asked, "Unker Wichard, what do they have a wed paper for?"

Mr. De Jarnette was hurrying with such rapid strides to the station that his nephew could hardly keep up with him. He was intent on making the train, and did not hear, and in his hurrying Philip forgot all about the red paper.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE MOTHER COMES TO HER OWN

IT was ten days or more after this that Mrs. De Jarnette's carriage stood at the door ready to convey her to the Capitol. It was confidently expected that the bill would come up now within a few days and there were a good many working bees around that classic edifice. Mrs. Belden had asked Mrs. De Jarnette to go with her that afternoon.

Since her talk with Judge Kirtley Margaret had been unremitting in her labors. Mrs. Belden told Mrs. Pennybacker that she had never done more efficient work. There was something very touching, she said, in her plea, so simply but so effectively urged, "It will not help me, but it will help other women."

"It almost seems," said Mrs. Pennybacker, in repeating this to Judge Kirtley only the day before, "as if this thing were slowly purging her of self. She is being tried in the fire, but she will come out of it with the dross burned away. I never have seen a woman grow in character as Margaret De Jarnette has in this trying half year."

"I trust she may get her reward," said the Judge. "But there is no telling. I tremble for her if there should be an adverse decision."

"There is one thing,"—Mrs. Pennybacker spoke solemnly.—"The Lord is preparing Margaret for what-

ever He is preparing *for* her. Her ear has been opened to sorrow's cry, and her hands will never be utterly empty again.

'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.'

That is as true now as it was when Cowper—under the shadow of a great cloud—said it."

Margaret was buttoning her gloves when there came a knock at the door. She had just come down from Rosalie's room. Since her talk with Mrs. Pennybacker on the Ellipse, she had been particularly careful not to neglect the poor girl, and had tried in every way to brighten her up. "She is so weak and her situation so peculiar that she might easily see slights that were never intended," she was saying to herself.

She took the card that the servant handed her and glanced at the clock with a shade of annoyance. She would just have time to meet her engagement at the Capitol without interruption. As she looked at the card her face blanched. It read

"Mr. Richard De Jarnette."

In the parlor she hardly waited for a conventional greeting.

"What is it? Has anything happened to Philip?"

"Yes," he answered gravely. "Philip is ill—not alarmingly so, I hope, but seriously."

"What is the matter with him? How long has he been sick?"

"I knew nothing of it till yesterday morning, though Mammy Cely tells me he was restless and feverish all the night before. I sent for the doctor at once and he

got a nurse there by noon. I shall get another one today—a night nurse."

"Two nurses! What do they think it is?"

"The doctor pronounces it scarlet fever."

"Scarlet fever!" Every vestige of color left her face. "How could he have taken scarlet fever? Has he been exposed to it?" Then rapidly counting back, "It must have been at the egg-rolling!"

Since she had answered her own question Mr. De Jarnette apparently did not consider it necessary to do so. She looked at her watch and moved across the room.

"I assure you that he shall have every possible care—but I felt that you ought to know. If you should wish to go to him—"

She turned as she reached the bell and looked at him without reply.

"Tell Fanny to pack a few things suitable for the sick room in my suit case," she said to the servant who answered, "and be quick about it." She called him back to add, "Send Mrs. Pennybacker to me."

"Can we catch the three o'clock train?" she asked in a voice so contained that he looked at her in astonishment.

"I fear not. And the next does not go till five. If—I notice that your carriage is at the door. If you would not mind the ride that would be the quickest way to get there. We could make it in an hour by good driving."

"Then we will go that way." Just at this minute Mrs. Pennybacker came in. She sat down, looking her surprise at seeing Mr. De Jarnette. There was that in his face which precluded the thought of his being here for any trivial reason.

"I am going with Mr. De Jarnette to Elmhurst," said Margaret, with preternatural calmness. "Philip is ill—with scarlet fever."

"Scarlet fever!" Mrs. Pennybacker's searching eyes were upon Mr. De Jarnette. "How—in the world—could he have been exposed to scarlet fever?"

"Probably the day of the egg-rolling," Margaret again answered for him. "I leave everything with you. I shall be there indefinitely."

"But Margaret, child, you ought not to go alone. I feel that I ought to go with you. And yet I don't see how I can leave Rosalie. She is in that condition that it is impossible to tell when the end will come. She may linger for weeks and it may come at any moment."

"You can't go," said Margaret. "And Bess cannot go, for she is too much of a child herself."

"And besides she has never had scarlet fever."

"No. There 's nothing for me to do but to go alone."

"The nurse will be there," suggested Mr. De Jarnette.

"Oh, the *nurse!*" said Mrs. Pennybacker.

"Aunt Mary—if—" she grew white and shut her lips.

"If the worst comes, Margaret, let me know, and I will go to you, no matter what happens here," said Mrs. Pennybacker, hastily. "But keep up a good courage, my child, and trust in God. 'His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.'"

Mr. De Jarnette stepped into the hall. He knew instinctively that Margaret would not want him here now.

When they were in the carriage and Mrs. Pennybacker standing beside it, he turned to Margaret.

"I forgot to say that I called Dr. Semple for Philip. If there is any one else you would rather have I should be glad to make the change."

Margaret looked disturbed.

"I should not want Dr. Semple. He is too young.

And besides—" She might have said, "I do not like him or feel easy in his presence," for all this was true, but she finished the sentence—"And besides, I would rather have Dr. Anderson, our own physician."

Mr. De Jarnette tucked the robe around Margaret and turned to Mrs. Pennybacker.

"Will you telephone Dr. Anderson to come out by the five o'clock train? The carriage will be at the station to meet him. Ask him to come prepared to spend the night if necessary. . . No, not in consultation—to take charge of the case. I will make it right with Semple."

They were soon out of the city and on the country road leading to Elmhurst. "Drive fast, Rogers," Margaret had said as they started.

They made no pretence of keeping up conversation. They were together only for the understood purpose of getting to the child as quickly as possible. After the first few questions and answers they had lapsed into a silence which neither felt inclined to break. Both were busy with their thoughts. Once Margaret, groping blindly for possible causes, said, "You don't know of any way in which he could have been exposed?"

"I—I think it must have been the day after—of the egg-rolling," he said. "Probably after he left you."

"And Mammy Cely promised so faithfully to look after him," she said reproachfully.

"I really think," said Mr. De Jarnette, hesitatingly—he would have given a good slice of his inheritance to have been able to lay the blame upon Mammy Cely, but remembering her insistent faithfulness, and goaded by his conscience, he could not do other than to tell her the truth,—"that if Philip was exposed that day I am the one to blame."

Margaret was looking at him with a fixed attention which compelled explanation.

"I—I took him with me, against her remonstrances, I feel obliged in common justice to say, to a house where I had business. He begged to go and I could see no reason why he should not. But as it turned out it was most unfortunate. I have reason to think that there was a child in the house recovering from scarlet fever, and in just the condition, Semple tells me, to communicate it."

"And there was no card?" she asked in wonder.

He hesitated. "They tell me there was a card. But I will have to acknowledge that I did not see it."

"You took Philip—in spite of Mammy Cely's remonstrances—into a house infected with a deadly disease," she said slowly, "and failed to see the most obvious of warnings."

"Say all you want to say," he answered miserably. "You cannot blame me more than I have blamed myself."

Six months before she would have taken him at his word, but a sudden sense of the futility of words smote her. Perhaps, too, even in that trying moment the wretchedness of his face touched her.

"Recriminations are worse than useless," she said at last. "I have found that out. There have been enough of them between us. In God's name, let us work together for once and try to save him."

"You are more than generous," he said after a long pause.

How much more quickly does thought travel than foot of beast. Margaret's was leaping forward with lightning rapidity. She was at Philip's side; saw him gasping, dying in her arms; stood beside his casket looking

down upon the face that she would see no more; saw a solitary woman's figure sitting by a little grave saying "This is the end." Then it seemed as if she heard an unknown voice saying, "This was a quarrel that God alone could settle, and he has done it in his own way."

She drew a quick breath then, almost like a child's gasping sob. Oh, anything but that! Anything! Let him but live! The wheels moved, turned on monotonously, she watching them. . . Nothing could be so bitter and so hopeless as death. *Nothing!* A Bible story that she had heard Mrs. Pennybacker read one day in Rosalie's room came suddenly without reason into her mind. It was about the two women who claimed the one child, each saying, "This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead." It had seemed to her a cruel test that Solomon the Wise had put them to when he said, "Bring me a sword," and then, "Divide the living child in two and give half to the one and half to the other." And while the false claimant said, "Yea, let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it;" surely it was the true mother, the one whose the living child was that cried out with yearning, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child and in no wise slay it." . . Oh, it was a true test! Anything but death! *anything* but death!

A shiver passed through her, and Richard De Jarnette leaning over tucked the robe around her without speaking. Only once did he open his lips after that. Then, as if urged by the impetus of some kindred fear, he leaned forward and spoke to the coachman:

"Drive faster."

Mammy Cely met them at the door and took Margaret to her room, while Mr. De Jarnette went directly to Philip. He was possessed of a wild fear that the child might be dead when they got there. He wondered a little at Margaret's delay. Why did she not go directly

to him? He understood it five minutes later when she came quietly in clothed in her sick-room garb. This was no visit. She had come to stay. He marveled to see her quiet contained manner. As she came in he moved instinctively toward the door, feeling himself an intruder in his own house. There seemed almost profanation in his witnessing the meeting between the two he had separated. But he did not go soon enough to miss Philip's glad cry, "Mama! oh, *mama!*" Nor Margaret's soothing answer, which was cheery as well, "Yes, dearest. Mama 's come to stay now. There! . . . . there! . . . Mama knows."

He closed the door softly behind him.

When Dr. Anderson and the night nurse got there Margaret was in control.

"I can hardly see any necessity for her staying," she said, when after the doctor's examination she had followed him down to the library where Richard was, for consultation. "With one thoroughly competent nurse to direct things and see that everything is right I would rather not have the other one around. I shall be with him all the time any way."

"With the second nurse here that will not be necessary," urged Mr. De Jarnette. "It is desirable to have you here, but between them they can do all the nursing and save you. That is why I got this second one."

"You have done all that money can do," Margaret said coldly, "but there are some things money cannot do. One of them is to fill a mother's place at a sick child's bed. I shall stay in Philip's room at night whether they wish it or not. I shall not leave him to the nurses, and they may as well understand it."

"I only meant to relieve her, if possible," explained Mr. De Jarnette to the doctor when she was gone.

"You can't very well relieve a mother when her child

is sick, Mr. De Jarnette," the doctor said rather dryly. "It is in giving, not in saving herself that she finds comfort. Let her have her own way."

So in a great arm-chair at Philip's side where he could see her if he woke she lay and watched the hours away. It was Richard's big leather covered chair that he had brought up for her when he found she would not be persuaded. She could notice the odor of cigar smoke about it. The taper burning dimly threw into relief against the shadows the little white bed where lay the child, and beyond it the bookcase where his unused books and playthings were. Even at that moment she noted jealously how they were accumulating. The ghostly light showed her the morning glories on the lattice and the humming birds that Philip loved, and the sad eyes of the Bodenhausen.

The nurse, wisely provident against a time of waking, was dozing in her chair. . . How strange it was to be here in this house—the house of her enemy—the man whose grip had been on her heart for five long years! She had reason to hate him! How hard and unrelenting he had been! how bitterly hard! And yet—

Going over the events of this day, one by one, she could not say that at close range he had seemed other than a man of flesh and blood.

CHAPTER XXXIX

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

IN the days that followed there was fierce battle made for the child's life, and the rival claimants fought side by side. For once all animosities were laid aside, all bitterness forgotten. They were making common cause now against man's implacable foe, and nothing draws us together like a community of interests or fears. Physicians, nurses, servants,—all gave their best aid—there is something about a fight with death that instantly fills the ranks—but it was upon these two that the stress fell. And they shared it.

By one of those unaccountable fancies of a sick person, Philip had taken a dislike to the nurse, and would let her do nothing for him. The other one had been sent back the morning after she came.

"Do you think we had better change?" asked Mr. De Jarnette of the doctor. "Still, the nurse seems faithful and competent. It is a most unfortunate notion he has taken."

"Children have very poor judgment," said Dr. Anderson, satirically. He knew how matters stood with the De Jarnettes and was not on the side of the testamentary guardian. "It is not unusual for them to prefer the most inexperienced mother to a competent nurse. No. Let it alone. It will work itself out."

It worked itself out by their taking almost entire charge of him themselves. The nurse was always there, it is true, to direct, to warn, to prepare draughts and appliances, but it was they who must administer, for Philip would have it so.

"I want Unker Wichard to hold me," he said one day.

"Mama will hold you, darling," Margaret answered with quick jealousy.

"I want Unker Wichard to hold me." And she looked on while Richard settled himself in the big chair and took the child in his arms. She turned away as she saw Philip's look of content.

"It is because Mr. De Jarnette is stronger," the nurse said in a low tone, seeing Margaret's look. "Children love a man's strength. It rests them."

"I want mama to hold my hand," said Philip from the depths of his uncle's arms. And Margaret taking a stool sat close beside the big chair and held the little feverish hand. He dropped asleep at last, and fearing to wake him they sat thus for a long time—a long, long time it seemed to Margaret. But she could not get her hand away without his clutching it and murmuring, "I want *mama,* Unker Wichard."

Sometimes when the child was restless Richard would take him in his arms and walk with him up and down, up and down, the length of the great chamber. He never seemed to grow weary, Margaret noticed, and he was as gentle in his touch as a woman. Perhaps there was something, as the nurse had said, in the combination of strength and gentleness to quiet overwrought nerves. She began to have a comprehension of a child's need of something to rest upon. She had never supposed that Richard De Jarnette could be gentle. And then, with-

out any special reason, her thoughts drifted back to that trying time when she first found out that she was a deserted wife. . . No—she could not say that he had not been gentle then. But since—What a strange man he was! So full of inconsistencies. One day when she had been holding Philip and started to get up with him in her arms, he—this hard, cold man who had not spoken two words to her that day—stopped her with a word, and before she could resist, had taken the child from her, saying almost sternly, "Don't ever do that. No woman is strong enough to get up with a child of his size in her arms." It struck her as a very strange thing that he should thus look out for her—should even think of such a trifling thing. But she gave Philip up to him without comment.

During those days and nights of anxiety they lived in and for the boy. Meals came and went and they ate them together, sometimes in silence, oftener talking of him. Days dawned to be filled with work for him; then darkness fell and covered the earth with its pall and their hearts with its terrors. In the morning they said "Would God it were night"; and in the night, "Would God it were morning."

Of the outer world they heard only through the doctor who brought them daily tidings and messages of encouragement from Mrs. Pennybacker. Rosalie was slowly failing. It did not seem possible for her to leave her now, unless—The sentence was never finished.

Mr. De Jarnette had not been to town since the day he brought Margaret out. He had voluntarily chosen to go into quarantine with her in the sick-room. She had protested at first, but without avail, and later she had come to depend upon him and was glad to have him there. It seemed to divide the responsibility.

"He don't seem to take no *intrus* in nothin' but that chile," Mammy Cely said one day. "He cert'ny is wropped up in him. And no wonder. Philip 's the onlies' one of his fambly left." And for once Margaret forgot to be angry that Philip was thus aligned with the De Jarnettes instead of the Varnums.

Everything but Philip was thrust into the background now.

"I have good news for you, Mrs. De Jarnette," said the doctor one morning, as he put his thermometer into the child's mouth and waited. Philip was at his worst that day and he wanted to get her thoughts away from him for a few moments at least and leave her with something to think about. "Your bill has passed the Senate."

"Has it?" she answered indifferently. Then, with an impatience that could hardly wait, "How is it, doctor? Is it any lower?"

"I 'll wager she has forgotten already what I said to her," the doctor communed with himself. "Women are all alike. They can manage the affairs of the nation or the universe until their children get sick, and then—it 's all up! Well, I guess that 's the way the Lord meant 'em to be."

One afternoon the doctor called the nurse into the adjoining room and talked with her in low tones. When he came back he said cheerfully, "I believe I will stay at Elmhurst to-night, Mrs. De Jarnette. I think he is going to be better, but we will know by midnight."

Margaret gripped the side of the bed. The doctor does not usually stay when the patient is better.

Suspense was in the air after that. Word was passed to the cabin that the crisis had come, and Uncle Tobe and his wife and Mammy Cely were having a prayer-meeting there.

At nine o'clock Philip was sleeping quietly and the doctor who had been up the night before went to bed. "Call me if there is any change," he said to the nurse, "and at twelve whether there is or not."

He advised Margaret to do the same, but she shook her head.

"Mr. De Jarnette," the nurse said in a low tone. "Had n't you better lie down now. You may be needed later."

"No," he said, briefly.

"It really is n't necessary," said Margaret.

"I prefer to stay."

She did not combat it. In her heart she was glad to have him there.

Through the long hours they sat thus, one on each side of Philip's bed. The nurse watching them could not but think how strange it all was.

Midnight and the doctor brought them hope.

"He is doing finely, nurse,—I could n't ask anything better." Then to Margaret, who stood beside him, he said feelingly, ignoring Mr. De Jarnette, "God is more merciful than man, my child. He has given you back your—why, my dear!"—for Margaret was clinging to him weak and nerveless, her head on his fatherly shoulder —"there! there!—here, nurse, look after her. She is all unstrung."

"It is sleep she needs," the nurse said, "and no wonder." And Margaret allowed herself to be led away.

"It beats everything the way these women do," grumbled the doctor. "You think they are wrought-iron till the danger is past, and then you find they are a bundle of nerves after all. I stumbled over that old negro woman of yours at the door—waiting for news, I suppose."

Mr. De Jarnette went to the door.

"Name er God, Marse Richard, how is he? I did n't dast to speak when I saw 'em takin' Miss Margaret off."

"Go to bed," said Richard, kindly. "The danger is past, the doctor says."

"We may as well go to bed and leave him to the nurse now," said the doctor, just behind him.

"I shall stay for awhile. Good-night, doctor."

When Margaret woke from that sleep of exhaustion the first faint streaks of daylight were in the sky. She had thrown herself on the bed, dressed as she was, and slept for hours. She started up and hurried to Philip's room. A wax taper was burning low. The nurse was not in sight and at first she thought the child was alone. She stepped quickly to the bed. Then as her eyes became accustomed to the semi-gloom she saw a figure in the big arm-chair.

"How is he? I—I must have slept a long time."

"He has hardly stirred."

"Poor little lamb! He was worn out too. Where is the nurse?"

"I sent her to bed. There was no use in both of us sitting up, and she was tired out."

"And you have sat here alone all night? and not even been able to read to keep yourself awake."

"I have found my thoughts quite sufficient," he said.

CHAPTER XL

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

PHILIP'S convalescence was a period of enforced companionship between the two. Mr. De Jarnette had to wait the lifting of the quarantine before he could go back to the city. Even the court had to wait for the quarantine. The case would have come on before this had it not been for postponement on account of it. Nobody had defied it but John Harcourt. He had done so twice. The first time Richard received him and took his message to Margaret, watching her closely as she read it.

"Mr. Harcourt? . . Oh, yes, I think I will go down —if he is n't afraid. I *want* to see him."

He heard Harcourt say a moment later, "Oh, hang your quarantine, Margaret! I *had* to come!"

Margaret! It had come to that. The next time Mr. Harcourt came the master of the house sent a servant for Margaret and walked in the garden while the visitor was there.

If Richard and Margaret had been companions in sorrow they certainly were now in joy. His relief that his negligence had not been visited with the punishment it deserved made him another man than the one she had known. As to the girl,—she was bubbling over with gladness. She even jested with him, calling him "Unker Wi-

chard" once, then blushing at the familiarity, and taking herself to task for it afterwards. But after all, she told herself in impatient protest, they had fought for him side by side—why should they not, for a few short hours at least, rejoice together. He was her foeman still, but the sick-room and its revelations forbade that he should ever seem her bitter enemy again. She would not permit herself to think of the case at issue between them. Philip would live. That was enough now. Let to-morrow and its complications take care of to-morrow. She could not be less than grateful to him for his tenderness to Philip. How sweet the apple blossoms were! And the lilacs!—the bushes that Richard's mother planted, grown to great trees now. How they filled the air with their fragrance. It was a beautiful world! Oh, a beautiful world!

A reaction came, of course. As time passed, a depression—natural enough perhaps—followed the jubilance of those first days. A growing unrest possessed her. She was not quite easy about Philip, though he seemed to be getting well. The doctor came only every other day now—or had until the last few days again. Philip had taken a fancy—just a child's passing fancy, of course—to go into the next room which was cool and dark, and opened into his. She came upon Dr. Anderson one day lifting his eyelids. The next day he brought a friend out with him. She need not be alarmed, he told her. The case had been rather an unusual one and he had spoken to Dr. Hawes about it. That was all. But he asked Margaret to leave them to themselves for a while, which seemed strange to her.

She went down that day to the back porch where Mammy Cely was ironing, and dropped down on the

old stone step. It was not Philip alone that troubled her this morning. The situation was pressing upon her more and more each day. How would it all end? and when? It would soon be time for the quarantine to be lifted. And then—She wished sometimes that when the case came up she could go into it with all her old hatred of Richard De Jarnette hot within her. But she knew in her inmost soul that she never could. Sometimes it rose tempestuously as of old, and sometimes it died away as a wind dies, leaving a becalmed ship upon a lifeless sea. What was the matter with her any way? she asked herself angrily. What had got into her that she could not control her moods? . . And why should Richard De Jarnette make it all so much harder for her by being first one thing and then another? He was a regular *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde!*

"Mammy Cely," she said suddenly, in pursuance of this thought, "sometimes it seems to me that we are all of us two persons—one evil and the other good. Sometimes one is on top and sometimes the other. I get tired of the fight."

"That 's so, honey!" said Mammy Cely, never pausing in her work, "that 's jes' the way it is. Ef you was standin' in the pulpit you could n't 'spound that doctrine any better 'n what you have. Humph! don't I know! The good Cely been fightin' 'g'inst the bad Cely in me for forty years, chile, an' all on account er that nigger-trader. I been prayin' fur that man ever sence I got religion. Yaas 'm! *I had to to git thoo!* That's what you has to do—pray fur yo' enemies.

"And now when we 're havin' a big meetin' and they all gits to shoutin' and clappin' their hands, and weavin' around, and singin'

'Oh-h, there shall be mo'nin',
Mo'nin', mo'nin', mo'nin',
Oh-h, there shall be mo'nin',
At the jedgment seat of Christ,'

seems lak I git so happy, and see my Savior so plain that I jes' calls out, 'Lord, save that man!' (I know the Lord gwineter know who I mean 'thout me callin' any names.)

"And at that here leaps up that ole black Cely in me (that ole sw'arin', cussin' Cely) and says, 'Yaas, Lord! save him at the last, but shake him over hell fur a while, and swinge him jes' a little bit!' . . Then I know I got to git down on my knees and go at it ag'in! Yaas 'm, that 's the way we has to fight!"

A few days after this Margaret was sitting at the window in Philip's room late in the afternoon. The quarantine had been raised and Richard had gone to town that day for the first time. Somehow it had been a trying day. Philip had been restless without him. She had been telling him a story, but it had not been a very satisfactory one—Philip had had to make frequent suggestions and amendments, for she was absent-minded and not in her best story-telling vein.

Her eyes wandered down the long avenue of elms that had given the place its name. What monarchs they were! Well might they be called the kings of the tree-world. They led clear down to the gate—the big gate that Philip had been so proud to open for his uncle. How jealous she had been over that,—and how foolishly. One could hardly see the gate from this window. She leaned further out. Yes, there was the gate, and—

"Mama," said Philip, "are you looking for Unker Wichard?"

"No!" she said with a sharpness most unusual. "I am looking at the elms."

"Ain't it most time for Unker Wichard to come?" asked Philip, querulously. He at least had missed him.

His mother did not answer, except to say as Mammy Cely came in with some newly hatched chickens to show him, "I 'll run down and get you some lilacs, dearie."

In the garden, laid out after the fashion of a half century ago, were the lilac trees, white and purple, now in their glory. The garden, kept immaculate by Uncle Tobe's unremitting care, was as Richard De Jarnette's mother had left it, with beds of old-fashioned flowers edged with box. At the further end of it was an arbor covered not with grapes, but with a luxuriance of wistaria, the long clusters of which hung down through the trellised roof. The old wistaria, too, was a tree, gnarled and twisted. It had broken down several arbors, Mammy Cely said, but Richard would not have it destroyed.

Margaret sat on the seat under the wistaria. She had torn off the lilacs ruthlessly and had her hot face buried in their cool depths. On the way hither she had seen a horseman cantering up the avenue. She would stay here until he had left Philip's room and gone downstairs. She did not wish to see him. She would be glad if she could never see him again. There had been a truce between them—yes, of course there *had* to be while Philip was so ill—but that was over now. He was her enemy after all—must always be—no matter which way the thing was settled. It was best that she should see as little of him as possible. Of course she would have to remain here as long as Philip needed her—her heart stood still at the thought of what would happen when he did not need her—but she would manage it so as to be

away when he was in Philip's room. That would be better—far better.

Then looking up she saw the man she was planning to avoid coming down the walk toward her.

"I am looking for you," he said, baring his head, sprinkled with gray, to the soft spring air. "Philip said you were among the lilacs."

She pointed to the fragrant mass in her lap, glad of their confirmation.

"How has he been?"

"Better—I think. Yes—I am sure he is better."

He sat down beside her. "That sounds as if you were keeping something back. What is it?"

His voice was so kind that foolish tears got into her voice.

"I feel as if something were being kept back from *me*," she said passionately. "That is just what the trouble is. It—it seems silly in me to go to you with every little thing—but—I have no one here—"

"I don't want you to feel that anything which concerns Philip is too little or too great to come to me with," he said, gravely. "Remember always that my interest in him is second only to your own. Now—what is it?"

"Well, if Philip is getting along so well—and he certainly seems to be—why should Dr. Anderson bring other doctors out here to see him?"

"Other doctors?" he repeated, with a startled look. "What do you mean?"

"I told you about the one who was here a few days ago."

"Yes. I think you said Dr. Anderson told you there were some features about the case that made it an unusual one, and that he brought the doctor out to see him for that reason."

"He did. But to-day he brought out another one—somebody from Johns Hopkins, I think they said—and when I had made up my mind to stay in the room this time, Dr. Anderson sent me off on some fool's errand—to get something that I know he did n't want—and when I got back whatever they wanted to do was done. But just as I got into the room I heard this man say, 'So long as it affects only the outer circumference of'—something, I could not catch that—'there is little to fear, but if—' and then he saw me and stopped."

He did not make light of her fears. He met them with sober sense.

"I should n't worry over this, I think. You know that Dr. Anderson can be trusted. If there is anything you need to know he will tell you. Besides, you are not even sure that they were talking about Philip. There is nothing alarming about a physician's taking a brother practitioner to see a case. . . What time will the doctor be here to-morrow? I may wait and see him myself. Now don't worry over it any more."

How easy it is to learn to rely on one stronger than ourselves. Margaret went back to the house strengthened and helped. Richard De Jarnette had calmed her fears as he would have quieted Philip. She felt almost humiliated that he should have such power, but she was comforted.

After that talk in the arbor it did not seem quite practicable to put into effect her determination to absent herself when he was in Philip's room. In fact, that very night they sat before the open fire which was kindled as night fell, she with Philip in her arms, and he in his arm-chair across from her, and though there was not much conversation between them, there was companionship in his presence. . . Their mutual interest in Philip

was a bond between them now that she was so isolated from her friends. . . He had been very gentle to her in the arbor.

"Mama, sing to me," said Philip. And Margaret sang softly the cradle songs he loved. They made a sweet picture as they sat thus. But in the midst of her songs Richard got up abruptly and went into the other room, drawing a great breath when he got there.

The nurse had been reading here, but had gone downstairs. He stood a moment looking around the room. It was strangely decorated, if decoration it could be called. On the walls were Madonna pictures of every name and age. In his present mood it moved him strangely to see them. It seemed as if in her desperate fear of being supplanted she had tried to keep always before Philip the close and tender bond between mother and child. Nothing else could explain all these pictures. His eyes went from one to another, pausing longest before that one of modern times which has been called the "Madonna of the Slums." That seemed to him the truest of them all and to have the most pathos. Here was no Virgin of the Immaculate Conception upheld by a knowledge of her mission,—only the human mother bearing on her arm, divinely strong, the sleeping child. He wanted to take it from her and rest her arm,—her tired arm. There was no halo here,—nothing but the shawl, the insignia of the lowly, about the patient face. He recalled something he had read once about how in the "elder days of art" the masters painted a nimbus round the mother's head, leaving her face often inane and weak; but how later, with a deeper insight if not a subtler skill, he put the halo in the face.

As he looked at the pictures with this thought in his mind, his eye fell on the photograph of Margaret and

Philip on the mantel. . . He took it up and looked at it. . . Yes, the halo was there as surely as in the face of Virgin mother. . . They all had it. He turned the picture to the wall with a quick frown. This was brave preparation he was making for the trial which would soon be on now. As he turned the face from him the words italicized stood out from the printed slip:

"One scrap alone I hold of all that once was mine."

He pushed the picture under a book and went out of the room.

Dr. Anderson did not come out till afternoon, but when he did the Baltimore man was with him. They went almost directly to the sick-room. "Let me have the nurse, please, this time," the doctor said, and Margaret, frightened and half indignant, was left outside with Richard.

When the consultation was at an end, the Baltimore man would not sit down, excusing his haste on the ground that he must catch a train.

Mr. De Jarnette followed him into the hall.

"Doctor—"

"Can't stop," said the doctor, curtly. "Dr. Anderson will say to the mother all that needs to be said." Plainly he did not recognize Mr. De Jarnette's rights in the case.

"Dr. Anderson," Margaret was saying when he stepped back into the room, "what is it? I *must* know."

For a moment the doctor did not reply. When he did it was not in answer to her question.

"Mrs. De Jarnette, will you sit down?"

She dropped into the proffered chair. There was something in his voice that took her strength.

"Mr. De Jarnette, will you too be seated? I have something of—of—importance—to communicate, and it should be said to both."

Richard De Jarnette was leaning on the mantel. He did not change his position.

"Go on," he said, briefly.

The doctor gave a slight shrug and turned his back upon him.

"My child," he said very gently, "I want to talk with you about the nature of this disease. We are not so much afraid of scarletina, or scarlet fever as you call it, as we used to be. We know better how to manage it."

"Yes," murmured Margaret, not knowing to what all this tended, "he really seems to be recovering more quickly than I had even hoped—but—"

"Ye—es, ye—es," continued the doctor, making carefully spaced lines on a scrap of paper and avoiding her eye. "You see it is not the disease that we are most afraid of—that is generally easy enough—it yields to treatment—but—it is—the complications that sometimes arise,—the after effects."

He was looking into her face now, and she grew white to the lips.

"Doctor!—"

"Yes," with a slight shake of the head, "it is the after effects. I have known many children to be left with permanent ear or eye trouble from scarlet fever. Possibly the danger may be averted—we can never tell at first—but—"

"Mama!"

Margaret stepped hastily into the next room. In her heart which had divined the truth she was thankful for a reprieve.

"What do you mean?" asked Richard De Jarnette,

harshly, driven by a great fear. "Why do you torture her so? Say plainly what you mean."

The outraged physician turned upon him savagely.

"I mean, sir," he said with some stiffness, "that this lady's child, who has unfortunately been allowed to contract scarlet fever, is in great danger of going blind. Do I make myself plain?"

His voice was low, but so intense in its indignation that it penetrated to the room beyond.

Richard De Jarnette staggered back as from a blow.

"Blind! . . . Good God!"

He turned abjectly toward the doorway between the two rooms where stood Margaret, white as death but with face transfigured. *This* was her opportunity. . . And what would Philip do without her if—With a swift movement she fell on her knees at his feet and stretched out her hands.

"Richard! oh, Richard!" she cried, her heart in her eyes. "Will you give him to me if he is blind?"

The old doctor turned to the window with a groan.

And Richard De Jarnette—

Have you ever stood before a monarch of the forest marked for the woodman's ax? Have you noted its majestic spread, its trunk of massive girth, its towering branches where

"The century-living crow

Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died"?

Have you stood thus and marveled not that so magnificent a thing could fall by hand of puny man? And have you further noted how it stood at last—majestic still, but with its strength so sapped, and its potentiality so meshed that any child might cause its overthrow?

For weeks the mighty oak of this man's pride and obstinacy had been preparing for its fall. Weak hands they were which had given the blows—a woman's and a child's; no one suspected that its strength was gone, he least of all; but when the crucial moment came, it needed but a baby's groping touch to lay it low.

He took her hands and raised her to her feet.

"Margaret! . . . Margaret!" he said brokenly. "From this hour—come what may—the child is yours."

The door closed behind him and the sound of his heavy tread echoed through the hall,—but she did not hear. The old doctor wiped his eyes, looked cautiously around, and stole from the room,—but she did not perceive.

She was on her knees beside her child, sobbing as though her heart would break.

CHAPTER XLI

UNDER THE WISTARIA

IT was three whole days before Margaret saw Richard De Jarnette again. She was wounded and outraged beyond the power of words to express at his apparent neglect. Under the circumstances it seemed almost brutal. She did not even have Mrs. Pennybacker with her, for when the doctor went for her he found her so unwell herself that he had not told her about Philip, fearing that she would overtax her strength to go to them. Margaret agreed with him that this was best, but her heart cried out for somebody to lean upon.

As night came on she found herself listening for his step with an eagerness that appalled her—appalled her and filled her with rage and humiliation as well. But she did not hear it.

Even Philip felt the restlessness which comes from an expected presence delayed—fretting, "I want Unker Wichard to hold me."

"Mama will hold you, darling. Uncle Richard is not here."

"But I want Unker Wichard."

It seemed to her that her heart would break. Not only had this man blighted both their lives but he had stolen her place in the child's heart, and then—left them. It was the way with men.

Philip was so insistent that Mammy Cely said at last,

"Yo' Uncle Richard ain't gwine come back to-night, honey. He done say so." Then to Mrs. De Jarnette, "No 'm, I don't know whar he went. But look lak he was powerful anxious to git away, for some cause whatsomever. It did so." She had not been told about the new danger.

The doctor came out early the next day and had a plain talk with her.

"He is threatened with choroiditis, an affection of the eyes that sometimes follows febrile diseases. So long as the trouble is confined to the outer regions of the choroid, it was not dangerous, but I feel it my duty to say to you that if it should attack the central field of vision it would be likely to result in gradual blindness. But he has many things in his favor and we will hope for the best. In the meantime, he should be under the care of a specialist. I do not feel competent to treat him. It was this that I was intending to say to you yesterday when the worst was forced upon you by your unfortunately overhearing the words between Mr. De Jarnette and myself."

He went on to say that he had tried to get Dr. Helsor, a Washington specialist, out to see him, but that he was ill and could not come. He had wanted to get expert advice before saying anything to alarm her, etc. Perhaps it might be a good plan to take him to Johns Hopkins to the hospital or even to Philadelphia. If she desired he would go with her and make arrangements for his admission. What did she think about it?

She felt that she could not give him an answer. Now that she was the sole arbiter of Philip's fortunes she was strangely loth to take upon herself the burden of decision. If she could only talk it over with—with Mrs. Pennybacker, she told herself weakly. It was Mrs.

Pennybacker she wanted to take counsel with. In her inmost heart—the one we cannot delude—she knew it was Richard. Richard De Jarnette! The hot blood crimsoned her face at the shame of it.

In these weeks in the sick room she had fallen into the habit of leaning upon his judgment which was always calm and dispassionate. When she had tried to excuse this to the doctor he had replied in a matter-of-fact way that it was not unnatural nor to be regretted. In a case of severe illness the person closest to the patient was not usually the one that had the best judgment. She reminded herself often afterwards of this, saying that that was why she relied so on him. Now that he was gone she felt strengthless.

Judge Kirtley came out on the first train and walked over from the station to tell her the astounding news that Mr. De Jarnette had thrown up the case. He had been to his (Judge Kirtley's) office late the afternoon before to say that he desired to have the case settled out of court and was prepared to relinquish all claims to the child under the will now and hereafter.

"Did he tell you about Philip?"

"Philip? No. Nothing more than I have said. He seemed in great haste to get away, for some reason, and not inclined to talk. What is it about Philip? He 's doing all right, is n't he?"

When he heard from her the story of the doctor's fears, and of Richard's renunciation of the child, his scorn and wrath knew no bounds.

"The cur!" he cried. "The cowardly cur!"

Then to his amazement Margaret turned upon him.

"It is not that," she said firmly, with an intuitive conviction that leaped past the very natural view the Judge

had taken. "It was not the fear of having a blind child to take care of that led him to this step. It was something else."

"What?" demanded the Judge. "Will you tell me what?"

"No," she said, "I cannot tell you what. But this much I am sure of—it was not that."

Judge Kirtley took off his glasses, polished them carefully, and put them on again. Then he looked over them into the face of his client.

"Well, Margaret, the ways of a woman and the working of a woman's mind are truly past finding out. *You* defend Richard De Jarnette!"

"I don't defend him," she cried hotly, "except against injustice. Anybody is entitled to fair play,—especially the absent. You have always urged me to look at both sides."

"Yes," he remarked dryly, "but heretofore you have never been able to do it."

She could not have told why she did it now. She protested to herself that it was only in common justice that she had spoken. But the truth is that love is the great discerner. It had cleared her vision and quickened her understanding. Unacknowledged, feared and fought against as the feeling was in the desperate spirit which recognized this as a death struggle, it was yet forcing her to see with its eyes. Henceforth, her judgments of this man would be, whether she would or not, truer, juster, more righteous judgments; her comprehension of motive where he was concerned, more subtly discriminating. It is the *law* of love.

It was the afternoon of the third day before he came. Three nights with their deadening, suffocating pall of

darkness had fallen upon her,—darkness and the whip-poor-wills that drove her wild. She had made up her mind that he was gone as Victor had. Then as suddenly as he had departed he appeared before her one afternoon out in the grape arbor, whither in her restlessness she had gone. She and Philip both loved the place and often walked there when she came to see him, running races sometimes up and down its dim aisles through which the sun flickered intermittently now that the wistaria was out. Richard De Jarnette coming home unexpectedly one day just before Philip was taken sick heard shrieks of childish laughter there and forgetting that it was Margaret's day at Elmhurst, went down to find out what made his nephew so uproariously gay. What he saw was the woman who to him had always been cold and stately chasing the child, shrieking with delight, up and down and in and around the arbor, catching him at last and smothering him with kisses—taking toll—while Philip releasing himself and poising in ecstatic anticipation, cried coaxingly, "Do it again!"

They had not seen him and he slipped away, fairly shocked at what her face could be. It was a revelation to him of one side of her that he had never seen. Somehow it intoxicated him. But if he was intoxicated by a look he was sobered by a thought. Of what other simple natural joys had he deprived her and the child? Mammy Cely had told him once that the two had little dinners in the arbor, with a cloth on the table and little cakes and animal crackers that she had brought him. "Some days," she said "looks lak she is a plumb child with him. She does it so he won't furgit how to play."

He wondered uneasily afterwards if children really did forget how to play.

As he came down the leafy arch to-day in search of

her, the recollection of that romp pierced him like a knife. A blind child would never play like that!

So soft were his footfalls on the thick grass that he was nearly upon her before she heard him. Then turning her head and seeing who it was, she started to rise.

"Don't get up," he said, taking the seat beside her, "I want to talk with you."

If the face that looked into his was unresponsive it was because she was trying so hard to still the tumultuous beating of her heart. It was shameful that it should throb so at sight of him! She would never let him know that she had had a thought of him in all these interminable days.

But when he spoke again, so gentle was his voice, so like her father's, that she had hard work to keep back the tears.

"Margaret, my child, did you think I had gone away and left you to bear it alone?"

The lump in her throat was like that she used to have in her youthful days. *Why* did he say "Margaret, my child," just as her father used to say? He might know she could n't keep from crying then.

"I have been to New York."

She made no pretense of answering him. It seemed inexpressibly cruel to her that he should have taken this time to go to New York,—unfeeling that he should tell her of it in palliation of his neglect.

"I went to consult an oculist."

At the word oculist all thought of herself of him, was gone.

"An oculist! Oh, what did he say?"

"Nothing definite, of course, until he has seen him. He will be down in the morning."

"You had to go," she said, still unreconciled, "you could not send?"

"No. I went directly from here to Dr. Helsor, a fine oculist in Washington. I thought that perhaps I could get him out here before night. When I reached his office I found him quite sick and unable to leave the house, though he saw me. He was not able to take any cases, and he advised me to go personally to Dr. Abelthorpe of New York and if possible to bring him down here to examine Philip."

"Did you see him?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, at last. But I had to wait two days to do it. He had been called out of the city and was not back until yesterday. I wrote you at once from New York—but I have just found the letter on my table with some other mail."

This was the explanation then. How simple it was. And his haste had been for Philip's sake!

"I should not have gone if there had been any other way, but Dr. Helsor thought that if I could see Dr. Abelthorpe personally, I would be more apt to secure his services. It was a fortunate thing I did, for I think no letter, however urgent, would have brought him. He is on the point of going to Europe. When I explained the circumstances, however" (and named the fee, he might have added), "he agreed to come. It was hard waiting, Margaret, knowing that you were alone—" she looked away from him, fearing that he might see the wretchedness of those days graven on her face— "but I am glad I did." He went on to tell her what the doctor had said. "He gave me great hope, though he says that such cases require care and patience."

"Oh, I will give him that! I will give up my life to him willingly, gladly, if only—Perhaps I would better go back with the doctor. Philip will be able to travel."

"You forget that he is just starting abroad. He goes in a very few days."

She looked up at him with a hopeless perplexity that wrung his heart.

"From what I have learned of Dr. Abelthorpe I am very anxious for him to have the care of Philip's case. I am aware—" he was speaking guardedly as one who does not feel sure of his ground— "that I have no right to dictate your movements in the matter, Margaret, as I have formally relinquished the control of Philip, but—I hope I have not overstepped the bounds—I have arranged with Dr. Abelthorpe (conditionally, of course), that if you are willing, and he still thinks it best after seeing Philip, that you will go abroad with him so that he can take charge of Philip at once as his attending physician."

"To go abroad?" she faltered.

"Yes. He thinks a sea voyage may do him good—says they rely a good deal upon constitutional treatment and—"

"But—I could not go alone," Margaret said, looking up at him hopelessly. Her heart was sinking unaccountably at the thought of drifting out into the great world with a sick child.

His mouth contracted suddenly. He looked away from her and his right hand out of sight gripped the bench on which they sat. He got up abruptly and walked to the entrance of the arbor. She thought he was listening to something. When he returned his features were as immobile as usual.

"No, you could not go alone. But Mrs. Pennybacker I am sure would go with you. And, of course, you would have Mammy Cely."

She found herself as wax in his hands. She could not plan for herself. If only the ocean were not so broad!

"There is one thing more, Margaret—a simple matter.

of business." It may have been a simple matter, but it seemed difficult for him to begin it.

"When Philip came to me last fall," he said, speaking gravely, but in a business-like tone, "I made a will by which everything I had was to go to him at my death. I have since taken steps to settle one half on him now in such a way that while I shall still have the care of it, the income will be immediately available for his use. No," answering the flush that swept over her pale face, "I have not forgotten what you said." She had told him once that she would rather Philip would starve than be dependant on him. "But you can't keep a man from doing what he wants to with his own. It is settled. Poor little chap. It is all the reparation I can make.

"As for you, Margaret," he went on, "I do not ask you to forgive me. I do not expect you to forgive. If there be an unpardonable sin I think I have committed it, for I have sinned against you, against womanhood, and against nature. When I think of you as I have seen you every minute of these three days, with what may be a blind child in your arms, I feel that the pitying mother of God could hardly forgive."

"You blame yourself unjustly for that," she said with quick generosity. "It might have happened if he had been with me."

"It would not have happened if he had been with you. You would have looked to his ways. You would not have been so immersed in business that you would have neglected a signal that meant danger to your child. But I—poor blind stubborn fool—"

"Let us not talk about it any more," she said gently. There was something in his remorse that touched her deeply. "It is done and it cannot be undone. I have never thought it was from any lack of love for

Philip. You simply violated a law of nature—and nature's laws are the laws of God. He never intended men to have the care of little children." She would have been more than human if she had not said that much.

Once more he got up abruptly, walking to the further end of the arbor and back again. She thought she had angered him. When he spoke, it was standing, the green pathway between them, instead of at her side.

"You 've beaten me, Margaret," he said, with a shake of the head. He was looking down at her with a half satirical smile on his lips. But it was of the lips only. There was no lightening of the gloom in the eyes bent upon her. "I wonder if you know how complete my rout has been."

She looked up quickly.

"You gave him to me voluntarily."

"Yes. I gave him to you voluntarily. And therein lies your victory. If the case had been brought to issue and decided against me there would have been excuse for my defeat. As it is, I have simply been beaten—by a woman. And the Almighty."

"It is hard to fight against the Almighty."

"Yes. And as hard, I find, to fight against a woman in the right. Perhaps the two mean the same thing. I rather think they do."

Then a tinge of bitterness came into his voice. "Of course the world—your world and mine—will have pleasant things to say about this latest chapter in the scandal of De Jarnette vs. De Jarnette. The natural inference, brutally stated, will be that I gave him up when I found that I might have a blind child on my hands. I could n't expect them to say otherwise. The world judges by appearances and appearances are certainly against me. Well! I don't care much about what it

thinks. The world and I have never been on very good terms. I have hated it and it has hated me. . . I am more concerned about what—"

His eyes with their dumb pleading finished the sentence and she answered them.

"You know I do not think it," she said. "I have thought hard and bitter things about you—and with cause—but not that. I have never for one moment thought that."

He took a step across the arbor with outstretched hand, grasping the one she gave him as man grasps the hand of man. Then dropping it he went back to his place opposite her.

"You have a right to think hard things about me," he said. "I have been hard. I never intended to let my heart soften to you. I meant to hold out to the last. But,—"

She broke the silence that fell upon them then by saying:

"There is one thing I want to ask you before I go away and this may be our last talk together. "Why—*why* have you been so bitterly cruel to me?"

He looked at her but did not answer.

"At first," she went on, "I thought it was from something hard in your nature,—or because you hated me,—or bore something up against me, I could not tell what. But since we have been together over Philip, and I have seen how gentle you are with him, it does not seem that you could ever have been wantonly cruel, nor that you—quite—hated me. What was the reason?"

"Miss Margaret! *Oh,* Miss Margaret!"

It was Mammy Cely's voice, and at this moment her rotund form appeared at the entrance to the arbor.

"Here 's a letter fur you."

"Will you tell me some time?" she asked insistently as the woman came nearer. She might never have so good an opportunity again.

"Mr. Harcourt 's waitin' fur you, Miss Margaret."

Richard De Jarnette's face hardened.

"There is nothing to tell," he said.

She took the letter and read it hastily.

"It is from Mrs. Pennybacker," she said, reading aloud with an awed look on her face,

" 'Rosalie is worse. I think this is the end. She wants to see you and Mr. De Jarnette together and will not be denied. Come at once.' "

CHAPTER XLII

THE CONFESSIONAL

"WILL you go with Mr. Harcourt and myself?" she asked. "There will be plenty of room, I think."

"No. I will go by train and meet you there."

When he reached the house on Massachusetts Avenue she had not yet come. Mrs. Pennybacker took him into the parlor.

"I am glad to have the opportunity to tell you something of the girl's history before Margaret comes," she said. "The poor child has something on her mind that she feels she must tell you. . . No, I don't know what it is."

When she had finished that pitiful story of woman's trust and man's perfidy, his face was haggard. He could guess the name. They both thought that her talk would be a plea for the child.

Margaret came at last and they were taken to the sick girl's room.

"She is very weak," whispered Mrs. Pennybacker at the door, "but perfectly clear in mind. For the last few days she has been in great mental distress about something. It is only since I promised her to send for you both that she has been quiet. Let her do the talking in her own way."

At the bedside of the girl Mr. De Jarnette felt a great

wave of compassion sweep over him. She was so young.

"Rosalie, this is Mr. De Jarnette."

He held out his hand but she would not take it, and he passed to a seat at the foot of the bed where he could see her without being himself under the eyes of any of them.

When Margaret bent over her, smoothing her hair, patting the worn cheek, and smiling into her eyes, the mental anguish of the last two days of which Mrs. Pennybacker had spoken, seemed to break out afresh.

"Oh, madam, do not take my hand. It is stained with blood. . . If—when you have heard all—"

"Why, Rosalie, my poor girl," Margaret said soothingly, "you have done nothing that you should plead to me for forgiveness. Your greatest sin has been to yourself and your child—and even then you have been more sinned against than sinning."

"Oh, madam, you do not know. It is this that I have brought you to this room to hear."

Margaret had drawn a chair to the bedside, thinking that the girl could tell her story, whatever it was, better to her than to a stranger.

"What is it, Rosalie? Tell me then if it will ease your mind in the least. What have you ever done to me!"

"What have I done? . . She asks me what I have done! Oh, madam—look away from me—and listen. 'T was I who—who killed him!"

"She is delirious," said Margaret, in an undertone, and laid a wet cloth on her head. But Richard De Jarnette bent forward, watching the woman with a quick comprehension that took in all she said and was supplying more.

"I am not delirious," said Rosalie, sadly. "I think I have been all these months that I have had the shelter of your roof and eaten your bread. Now I have come to myself. And whatever the result you must know the truth."

"What does she mean?" asked Margaret, turning to the others.

"Let her tell her story in her own way," suggested Mrs. Pennybacker. She saw that the girl's breath was becoming labored.

"Yes. Listen to me while I have strength to talk. And then—forgive . . . if you can. The man that wrought my ruin was your husband—and I killed him."

"My husband died by accident," Margaret said with white lips. "He said so with his dying breath."

"Then he spoke falsely—even in death," said the woman," for I killed him!"

"But—don't you remember you told me that your betrayer died from natural causes?"

"I told you that he died a natural death. He did; it was by my hand."

"Let her go on, Margaret."

"You know that day you came to the hospital and wanted to take my boy because he looked like yours and because you were so desolate?"

"Yes."

"And then you heard my story and were so filled with pity for a poor sinning girl that you brought me to your own home and put my child into my empty arms and said, 'This much of life's joy you shall have.' Oh, I have never forgotten those words! Do you remember that?"

"Yes," said Margaret.

"It was because your own heart was sore that you wanted to bind up mine. But I did not know—oh, be-

lieve me, I did not know—into whose house I was coming. I had not heard your name till one day the young girl called you Mrs. Osborne. I had not even thought of it. You were so gentle—so merciful—I did not care about your name. When one day I heard a servant call you Mrs. De Jarnette, I fainted. I was very weak, you know, and it came over me like a flash whose house I was in."

"I remember that time," said Mrs. Pennybacker in an undertone to Mr. De Jarnette. "We wondered what it was."

"I felt after that that I must go away," the sick girl said, "I felt that I could not stay under your roof knowing that I had made your child fatherless. But then—I thought if I should tell you you would send my Louis back to the Home and me to the Hospital, and I would lose him again just as he was getting fond of me. I tried to tell—but I could not."

"Can you tell us now connectedly just what you did—and how?"

It was Mr. De Jarnette that spoke. His voice sounded stern in its intensity.

"Yes—that was what I wanted to do. That was why I sent for you both." She looked up helplessly at Mrs. Pennybacker. "Where must I begin?"

"I have told him, Rosalie, all that we know. You need not repeat that. Begin where you went to Mr. De Jarnette in his office."

"Yes. I will try very hard to tell it connectedly. But it seems to come to me in bits. Some of it stands out so much more distinctly than the rest."

She lay still a moment thinking. Then fixing her preternaturally bright eyes upon him and speaking slowly, she began:

I had been sick for months in the hospital. But I was better then and soon would have to go away. I did not know where I could go and I worried a great deal about it. I was sorry—no, not sorry either—for there was my baby, and what would have become of him if I had died. Well, one day—the very day I was to be discharged—I saw in a paper that he, this man, had come back to Washington. After thinking it over I determined that I would go to him and ask him to settle on me enough money to let me take the child and go away somewhere where I need never trouble him any more—where I could have a little home and keep my baby with me. You see, sir, it was not that I was unwilling to work, but with the child I could not get anything to do."

Richard De Jarnette gripped the iron rail, smothering a groan.

"I went straight to him from the hospital. He was sitting at his desk cleaning his revolver—a pretty thing that seemed to catch my eye and hold it while we talked—it was so bright and shining. I remember thinking that the price of it would pay for many, many loaves of bread. . . I told him what I wanted. But—I think something must have gone wrong before I came, for he was very angry—said he had thought that he was through with me—that this was blackmail. Sir, I swear to you I did not know what blackmail was. I had never heard the word."

She waited a moment to recover breath and then went on.

"Oh, I said bitter things to him then. I seemed to see the child before my eyes, gasping as it did in those days when we starved before the fever came, and it maddened me. He bade me leave it in the Home if I could not

care for it, and go away—to some other city—I would soon forget it if I were away, and it would be cared for by the District. I, its mother, would forget! He said that he would give me money to go away from Washington—a ticket to Chicago or the far West—no more. He had done all for me that he could—far more than many a man would do—it would have to end some time—and more like this. A ticket to go away and leave my child! This was his cure for all my wrongs!"

Margaret stooped over and took the sick girl's hand. At the sweet touch of sympathy Rosalie turned toward her, the words coming now fast and feverishly.

"Then—then—oh, madam, I have been a wicked woman! I did not mean to do it, but while he was speaking something in my brain seemed to burst. I saw strange things all jumbled up together in a flash—the lilacs in our yard at home, a wretched woman of the street with painted face—a baby left upon a mountain side to perish as I had read in my history the Spartans left them, and whirling everywhere before my eyes that cursed shining pistol worth so many loaves of bread!"

She stopped, overcome by the recital. There was not a sound but the tick of the clock on the mantel. They were all in the fatal office.

Said Richard De Jarnette with a white set face,

"Go on!"

"Then—I can't seem to remember anything clearly then except that I caught the pistol up and fired. I think he must have started up, for he fell—against me." She closed her eyes and a shudder ran through her. "Oh—h! I have seen his face so often in the night!"

"What happened then? Go on!" urged Richard, fearing that her strength might fail. "It was but a moment from the time that shot was fired before I was there. Where did you go?"

"The minute I fired the thought came to me of my own danger. I had not seemed to think of it before. And at that second I heard somebody trying to get in. I thought they were coming to get me. You know how things will come to you all in a flash. I remembered that there was a night latch on the door—that I could get out if they could not get in. In a second I had thrown the pistol on the floor and was in the hall with the door closed behind me."

"It was that I heard," breathed Margaret. "I *thought* I heard a door shut."

"It was just a step around to the side hall where the elevator was. As I turned the corner I heard somebody running from the room across the hall. Then the elevator came. I stepped in, and before anybody knew what was the matter I was in the street. . . No, I don't know where I went, or what I did. I think from what they told me afterwards that I went back to the hospital and they took me in. At any rate, I found myself there when I knew anything again—long afterwards. They said I had had a relapse."

"Why have you waited so long to tell this?" demanded Richard De Jarnette, so sternly that she cowered down in the bed.

"Oh, sir, I was afraid to tell. Afraid—" her voice sank to a frightened whisper—"that they would hang me. Will they—do it—now?"

"No!" said Mrs. Pennybacker, constituting herself judge and jury. "No!"

"Oh, I have been frightfully afraid. Sometimes I have put my fingers around my throat and pressed hard, to see—"

"Rosalie!"

"Yes,—and then I always gave it up. I *could not* do it."

"But," the girl went on, turning to Margaret again, "it was not that alone. I think I could have got so after a while that I would have dared to die even that shameful death—I was so worn out with it all—the struggle and the remorse. But for my child's sake I could not tell. I felt that you would cast him off if you knew all. How could you bear him in your home when—when—and if you turned against him who would take him up? Oh, madam. . . I tried to tell. But when I thought of him I could not. To keep this horrible secret that was eating my life away seemed the only thing left that I could do for him."

"Rosalie, why have you told it now?"

"Because—oh, madam, I cannot die with a lie upon my lips—a lie that keeps *your* child from your arms."

"My child—from my arms?" repeated Margaret. groping for her meaning. "Why,—"

"Rosalie, you have talked enough now," said Mrs. Pennybacker, kindly. "You are worn out."

"One moment," Margaret interrupted. Then dropping to her knees beside the sick girl she took her hand, saying solemnly, "Be at peace! I promise by the love I bear my own child that I will be a mother to yours. From this day he shall bear his father's name."

"Oh, madam!"

Mr. De Jarnette broke the silence that fell on them then.

"There is no need that this should ever be known outside of ourselves. To the world Victor De Jarnette died by accident. So let it rest."

When Rosalie spoke again it was only to murmur as if to herself, "I did not know—the world had people in it—like this!"

To Mrs. Pennybacker, who bent over her with a reviving draught, she said as simply as a child would say it, "Do you think God will forgive me now?"

"'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,'" was the instant answer. "'He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.'"

To Margaret it was an assurance of infinite compassion.

But the sick girl started up, crying, "Oh, not as a father! Not that! My father shut his door upon me. My child's father cast him off. If it could only have been 'as a mother'—"

"Rosalie, it is! For, as if that was not enough, the dear Lord says: 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'"

"Does it say that? . . Is it true? . . . 'As one —whom—his mother comforteth!' Oh, my mother would have comforted me! She would have taken me—sinful though I was—to her arms! *She* would have—"

She closed her eyes and lay still. Then they saw her lips move.

"'As one—whom—his *mother*—comforteth.'"

Mrs. Pennybacker motioned them silently to go.

They reached the lower hall before either spoke.

Then Margaret said, not raising her eyes to his, "Richard, if God can so forgive, may not we?"

He was silent so long that she looked up at him in wonder. His face was gray.

She opened her lips to ask him if he were ill, but at that moment something in his look palsied the words. Her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth. Her breath was shut off. An instant, horrible enlightenment had fallen upon her. Then,

"You thought—I did it!" she said.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN THE LIBRARY ONCE MORE

HE caught her hand as she turned from him.

"Margaret, for God's sake, hear me before you go!"

Opening the door of the library he drew her in and closed it behind them. She dropped into a chair and waited for him to speak. But it was the first time they had been there together since the reading of the will, and the benumbing influence of that hour fell on him like a nightmare. He felt that he could never make her hear. Struggle as he might for utterance, it would only be an inarticulate horrible moan at last. If he could but have heard this story before! If only the fatal words, "and shall claim the child," had been unsaid—how different all would be! How frightfully easy to utter words. How impossible to evade the avalanche of consequences they set loose!

From his place by the mantel with one arm resting on it he regarded her in silence. Neither evaded the other now. They knew by instinct that it was the final passage between them.

"Go on," she said. "Let me hear it now." Repeating, "You thought—I did it," not scornfully, nor even in reproach, but as one who is in a maze and hunting for the clue.

"I thought you did it."

"For five long years you have believed me a murderess, and have given me no opportunity to vindicate myself!"

"For five long years I have believed you a murderess, and have given you no chance to vindicate yourself!"

It seemed almost as if he were mocking her, but she knew from the wretchedness of his face that he was simply pleading guilty.

"This then is the explanation of it all—why you have followed me so pitilessly—why—"

"Margaret, listen to me!" he cried, throwing off the incubus that was upon him. "Let me add my part to the pitiful story you heard upstairs before you pass final judgment. Then I will go away—out of your life forever."

"You cannot go away out of my life forever," she said passionately, remembering Philip. "It is too late for that! When one thrusts himself into the life of another he cannot leave it at his will. Neither can he escape the consequences of his acts by turning his back upon them."

"True! Too true!" he answered mournfully. There was a note of such utter misery in his voice that it touched her heart.

"I hope you will believe me when I tell you that not one word of that poor girl's story was ever known to me before. Had it been, I should not have left it to you to befriend her and care for her child. I had always known that Victor was wild and reckless, but young men seldom make confidants of their mentors. I did not pry into his affairs. I think perhaps I knew in a general way that they would not bear it, and—I shrank from it. I do not expect you to understand my feeling toward

Victor. Wayward as he had always been, I yet loved him. There was good in the boy. I believe now that had he lived you might have won him to a better life. I had hoped until that hour that it might be. But with life snuffed out, his day was done. And it was your hand had struck him down!"

She shook her head in sorrowful protest.

"I know—I know. But to me—in all these years—it was your hand." He spoke in fragments, with silences in between. "You asked me that day what he said. Perhaps if I should tell you now it would be some extenuation at least."

She looked up at him breathless. "What was it?"

"As I bent over him he said, 'She 's killed me, Dick.' "

Margaret sank back in her chair. "And it was Rosalie!"

"Yes,—Rosalie. But as he said it you stood above him with a smoking revolver in your hand—a revolver I had seen here, on your table, but a few months before."

She opened a drawer and took it out.

"It has been here ever since. He had a pair of them."

He took the revolver in his hand and looked at it. It was of peculiar workmanship—the counterpart of one now in his own possession—the one he took out every now and then and looked at. He drew a quick sharp breath that was almost a groan,—then laid it down, saying quietly, "I did not know that. It might have changed everything if I had known. You see how strong it made the case against you. And then his saying—"

"Did he say anything else?" she questioned eagerly.

"Yes. He said, 'Don't prosecute. I deserved it.' "

"And it was Rosalie!" she repeated. "It was Rosalie he tried to save. Oh, I am glad he said that—glad! Why did n't you tell her?"

"There will be time for that." He marveled that she could think now of Rosalie. "Do you not see how all this misled me?"

"I see. You thought it was his treatment of me he meant."

"Yes. And then you told me once that if he ever tried to take the child—"

"That I should kill him. I remember it. It was in the days when I was full of words. . . And you believed I did it!"

"As God hears me, I did. Margaret, you can never know what that struggle was. It racked me. His blood cried to me day and night—as I watched it ebb away, and as I stood beside him in the silent house that I thought *you* had desolated, I prayed that vengeance might fall on you for this thing. As for me, I was bound,—bound by his dying wish and his dying declaration. Who would believe me if I charged you with the crime? And even if proof were not lacking how could I bring you to justice when with his latest breath he begged that I would spare you? At last I remembered the words, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' I believe in that. God's vengeance does not always come swiftly—but it comes! I believed that some day it would fall on you. And I could wait!"

She stared at him with fascinated eyes, half feeling in the tension of the moment that she was the guilty thing he thought her.

"The waiting was not long. When the will was read —the will that by the accursed law of this District had power to take your child from you and give him to me— I saw in it my opportunity. They say there is the beast in every man—the old primordial instinct to rend and kill which ages of training and leash and club have

not exterminated. I do not know. Sometimes I think it may be true. What I do know is that I came into this room a man, with a man's self-control, but when I found my hand upon your throat, found that *my* time had come, something within me that I did not know was there leaped up and fought and roared. I could not hold it down. It mastered me! And at the last it took my form and said through my lips, 'Vengeance shall be *mine! I* will repay! . . And I will—repay—through—*law!*"

She shrank from him as we do in the presence of the mighty elemental forces of nature.

"It seemed to me in my distorted state of mind that this was Heaven's justice, and that I was the instrument to mete it out. . . But Margaret!" He stretched out his hands toward her and then let them drop,—"it was not true. In my arrogance I had usurped the prerogative of Almighty God—and He—has—punished me!"

His voice sank lower and lower with each word.

At last she broke the silence that was stifling her, saying wonderingly and with hesitation,

"How?—how has he punished you? I think I do not understand. Through Philip, do you mean?"

"No. Not through Philip—not through Philip! Through Philip's mother."

The room lapsed into silence then. Her heart was beating so that it seemed to her that he must hear the throbs. It was impossible to mistake his meaning.

"I count it part of my humiliation," he said in proud self-abasement,—"and I will not spare myself—that I must come at the last to the woman I have persecuted, the woman I have hunted down and robbed, the woman I have in my heart held guilty of foul crime—and tell her—that—*I love her!*"

She did not stir nor look at him.

Then his mood changed, and from his stand by the mantel he regarded her with a sort of grim humor.

"This surely is the irony of fate," he went on, speaking almost as if in soliloquy, "that I should come to *you* with tale of love! . . . Margaret, why don't you taunt me with my weakness—jeer at me—say the biting, scathing things you must want to say? This certainly is your opportunity. It would complete your victory."

"There is no victory," she said in a dead tone, "it is all defeat."

He was filled with contrition.

"Forgive me. I seem to have an infinite capacity for being cruel. And yet,—how can I make you understand that I would give all I hold dear if I could have the right to shield you? How can I expect you to believe— . . . Why, Margaret! even the boy—the boy —has crept into my heart and intrenched himself until I cannot put him out."

A faint pink stole over her eyelids and her chin moved just once, but she did not look up.

"And you— . . . child, it overmasters me! Every fiber of my being cries out for you! It is so different from a boy's paltry passion."

He took a step toward her as though driven by a force beyond control and said in passionate pleading, "Dearest!—let me call you that just once—did you think you could come into my starved life in the close, intimate, even though enforced comradeship of the sick-room, and leave that life just as you found it? Could show me the love and sympathy, the infinite patience and tenderness of the mother—a thing I had never known—and the dignity, the sweetness, the charm of the woman, —did you think that you could thus reveal yourself to me, and then go away and leave me the same man I

had been? You never thought of it at all, did you? You were thinking of Philip—always Philip.

"But, Margaret, *I* was human. I thought of you. And while you rocked the child and sang soft cradle songs to him, I listened and dreamed dreams. Let me tell them to you—just once—for their very wildness. I dreamed that this was *our* home—such a home as I had known in my warped life only in dreams—and that we had made it, you and I; that the song on your lips was a song of joy, and that I had taught it to you; that the light in your eyes was the love-light—not for Philip, but for me; that it was *my* child upon your breast; that—no, do not trouble to remind me that even in my dreams I was a fool? But—my God! if only I could have had the chance another man might have!"

When he spoke again his voice had a different quality, a yearning compassion that had in it something of the maternal.

"But Margaret, that was before I knew of Philip's new danger. Since that last crushing blow has fallen upon you the feeling is so much more infinitely tender. I think a hundred times a day 'If I could take her and her helpless child to my heart and hold them there forever,—if I could bear for her the load that I have forced upon her, or help her bear it; if I could go with her upon this pitiful quest; could stand beside her and let her lean upon my strength; could comfort her—' "

She put her elbow on the table and rested her head on her hand. Two big tears rose and struggled under her closed lids. She needed comforting!

" '—and if the worst comes—as it may—could have her lay her head upon my breast and weep her grief out there—' "

The drops pushed through. What woman, oh, what

woman, in her time of sorrow has not felt need of such a refuge?

"Margaret! if I could thus atone, I feel that I should ask no more of earth. But—that I have with my own hand barred myself forever from your life—*this is my punishment.*"

WHEN he spoke again it was in his even, controlled voice, taking up the subject they had talked of earlier under the wistaria, and telling her of the arrangements he had made. The doctor had suggested the sea voyage for Philip and had also urged his being put under the care of a specialist at once. He had taken the liberty of engaging passage for them on the *Etruria,* the steamer on which the doctor sailed. But this was conditional, of course.

He waited a moment, but she did not speak, and he went on rather hurriedly to explain that he had done this because he knew the staterooms might all be taken if he waited to communicate with her. It was only by their having been surrendered that he had been able to get these. He hoped he had not offended her by his action in the matter. They could be given up at any moment by telegram.

She shook her head, not taking down her sheltering hand. She had heard this last as one hears in a dream, —thinking dully that this was the end. During her contest with him she had been nerved to fight; now that it was over she felt strengthless—nerves in collapse. When he had spoken of her "pitiful quest" she seemed to see a dreary stretch of road before her that had no end. She and Philip were on it, toiling along, going she knew not where, stumbling, falling sometimes but getting up and struggling on— and Richard behind them stretching out his hands!

If—if—oh, that would be a shameful thing! . . . the man that had stolen her child! . . a monstrous thing! Then something rose up within her and contended fiercely, "But it is *your* life!" What? . . . give up now? . . make complete surrender, and in such a way? . . . Oh, no. She would be stronger when he was gone. The shock of it had unnerved her. That was all.

She got up then and stood before him, her head thrown back in its old way, meaning to thank him courteously and in conventional phrase for what he had done, speaking in the effusive fashion which says so much and means so little, "You are very kind. We will take the staterooms and go at once. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness." Thus would she build up the broken-down wall that must always be between them.

But when she stood before him and looked into his stern set face, remembering all he had said to her, somehow the road stretched out interminably before her, and—

What she did was to reach out weak hands to him, saying brokenly,

"Richard! I cannot go—without you."

"Margaret! . . . *Margaret!*"

FIVE days later they sat together on the deck of the *Etruria,* outward bound. It was within an hour of the time of sailing and a mild bedlam reigned. Downstairs Mammy Cely was arranging things in the staterooms. Upstairs Philip, a shade over his eyes and a steamer rug thrown over him, was snuggled in the arms of his new father.

The doctor had given them every hope.

People were hurrying on to the steamer and out on the deck to talk with friends across the rails. Fare-

wells were being spoken, tears shed, and parting admonitions given. There was a confusion of sounds. "Goodbye!" "Where 's the purser?" "Don't get seasick!" "No, indeed!" "Did you get the little bag? Why no—there were four." "Oh, *where 's* the purser?"

Through this babel the deck steward was making his way with a letter held high.

"Is Mr. De Jarnette here? A telegram for Mr. De Jarnette."

Richard opened it without looking at the address. "It is for you," he said.

Margaret in the chair beside him took the telegram and read:

"Bill passed House this morning. President's signature assured. Hurrah!

"Harcourt."

She slipped her hand under the steamer rug into his, where Philip's lay. He closed upon them both.

"Thank God!" she said softly, "for other mothers who need it."

CHAPTER XLIV

AS AFORETIME

JOHN HARCOURT had asked Bess for a drive—a farewell view, he told her, of Capitol Vista, Rock Creek Park, the Zoo, and all the rest. He said it so cheerfully and with such unchecked flow of spirits that Bess, smothering an inward sob, summoned her woman's pride and matched his exhilaration with her own. But if the truth were known, and the truth is never known under just these circumstances to anybody or anything but the girl's inmost soul, she was feeling far from gay.

Life seemed to be disintegrating. Margaret and Philip were on the ocean; Rosalie, in Oak Hill Cemetery; the little boy given into her grandmother's keeping until the house on Massachusetts Avenue should be re-opened; and—after all this was the worst—they were going home to Missouri. Her life in Washington was over! Well,—it had been a beautiful time that she had had, she thought with a tightening of the throat, and he, more than anybody else, had made it so. She should always feel grateful to him and love him for that—as a friend. Of course she was nothing to him but a child. And the tightness grew to a lump.

She was putting into her trunk a book of views he had brought her—"to remember him by," he had said. She turned the pages listlessly. It did seem too hard that they should have to go home just now! Washington was so

beautiful in May, everybody said. A drop fell on the classic columns of the Treasury Building—another—and another. She really could not tell now though she was looking at it so hard whether the pillars were Corinthian or Ionic. She was thinking, "It was on these steps we stood that day—"

Strange! strange! how little architecture, art, affairs of State or Nation are to a young girl whose heart is saying, "And I must leave him."

FROM that ride she came back to her grandmother with softly shining eyes and the sweet tale that has been told and told and told again since Time was young. . . And—would her grandma be willing to give her to him?

"But, Bess, I thought you felt that you could never trust yourself to any man after Margaret's experience?"

Bess answered earnestly.

"Grandma! I would n't to anybody in the *world* but Mr. Harcourt. But it is different with him, you know."

When she was gone Mrs. Pennybacker took off her glasses and wiped them.

"As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end," she said reverently, "Amen."

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